

**SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

Monday June 4, 2018

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Seattle City Hall, Rm L280 Boards & Commissions

Approved August 6, 2018

**Commissioners Present:** Beverly Aarons, Clifford Cawthon, Sherry Collier,  
Calvin Jones, Daniela Lopez, David Mooney,  
ChrisTiana Obey Sumner, Michael Padilla Ocampo,  
Jessica Westgren

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**Commissioners Absent:** Laurie Rocello Torres

**Commission Staff:** Maureen Sheehan, Department of Neighborhoods

**Guests:** Mr. Tim Thomas, *PhD, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Washington  
eScience Institute & Department of Sociology.*

*Seattle Renter's Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript, and represent key points and the basis of discussion.*

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**Welcome & Announcements**

- Ms. Sherry Collier called the meeting to order.
- Ms. Maureen Sheehan announced that Ms. Jessie Jacobs and Mr. Jack Barker have both resigned from the Commission and she is working on their replacements.
- She also reminded the Commission about the norms, rules and procedures and to be respectful and mindful about each other when discussing and collaborating.
- She mentioned there will be a report out by these work groups towards the end of the meeting.
- The July 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting has been rescheduled to Thursday, June 28<sup>th</sup> due to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday.
- The ST3 requested to have two Commissioners to attend and participate in a focus group. Ms. Laurie Rocello Torres and Mr. Clifford Cawthon will volunteer to participate.
- There are currently two Commissioners that are in the Interview Group and there is an opportunity for someone who to participate in the interview process due to Mr. Barker's resignation. Mr. David Mooney volunteered.

**Minutes Approval (00:04:48)**

There was a motion to adopt the minutes from May 7, 2018, and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion was adopted.

**Action: Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) Statement (00:05:27)**

- The MHA statement was distributed electronically last week to the Commissioners for any feedback or comments.
- Ms. Daniela Lopez suggested to add a language that refers to disabled people or people living with disabilities to be included in the affected communities.

- Ms. Sheehan noted that the Council hearing is on June 25<sup>th</sup>, and she will confirm the start time.
- A motion was made to approve the MHA statement as written with the addition of Ms. Lopez's addition and the motion was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion passed unanimously.
- Ms. Collier made a motion to have Ms. Jessica Westgren as the lead to read the letter in front of the City Council and Ms. Lopez as an alternate, and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Briefing: Gentrification & Rent: Who is Vulnerable to Neighborhood Change (00:18:42)**

*Mr. Tim Thomas, PhD, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Washington eScience Institute & Department of Sociology.*

- Mr. Tim Thomas presented on “Gentrification and Rent – Who is Vulnerable to Neighborhood Change.”
- Neighborhoods get segregated due to the system of housing or redlining where banks that offer loans drew lines and established specific racial exclusion formation and ideology. Restrictive Housing covenants were established where banks created hazardous neighborhoods and identified African Americans would depreciate home values in certain areas that were segregated.
- The stages of gentrification include: a) sweat equity in low-income neighborhoods; b) young families; c) risky investment; and d) large scale development.
- He explained his displacement tier theory and how white and black migrants move in various parts of the city. He showed the changes of black migrants in urban centers not only affect Seattle but from different cities between 1980 and 2010.
- He talked about evictions and mobility and noted that economic status plays a significant role in mobility. A higher income presents the higher mobility to seek higher opportunities.
- Evictions focuses on lower-income that are forced to move not by choice but by force. It is a consequence of increasing rent due to inadequate welfare and housing burden.
- A comment was made on how to convert and reach out to voters to support any of policies about rent and evictions. Mr. Thomas noted that more evidence-based research is needed to implement such policies and pushing the racial equity lens in these policies may bring people more sympathetic about the issues.
- A question was asked if building more market rate housing is beneficial to discourage conflict with lower income people for affordable housing. Mr. Thomas noted that market rates are going up and need some type of intervention. He added that density and zoning are more helpful.

**Discussion: Rent Stabilization/Rent Control (01:13:10)**

- Mr. Cawthon shared his thoughts on rent stabilization and rent control. These are the tools that slow and regulate how rent is applied to ensure the greatest amount of people can find housing in any city. It is also controversial because it takes rent money from a commodity to a publicly regulated commodity.
- Rent control is legal. WA state has preempted cities and other jurisdictions from instituting rent control and there is currently an effort to lift the ban.
- The City of Seattle has implemented a form of rent stabilization particularly with a 10% rent increase at any given time.
- The MHA framework where units are made affordable in exchange for increased height is a form of rent stabilization, but it does not last.
- Rent control and rent stabilization is a tool that can be used to stop the current housing issues, but it needs an intersectional approach. There are other issues that needs to be address such as systematic racism, implicit bias, etc. By implementing these tools, the objective is to slow down the rent increases and protect the most vulnerable.
- Mr. Calvin Jones asked what next steps for the Commission could be and how to continue this discussion.

- Mr. Cawthon noted that the City has signaled its support for legislation to lift the preemption law. Legislation will be reintroduced in 2019 and this Commission can rally in support of the legislation, have consensus to advise the City Council on how to adopt the measures of the legislation and receive buy-in from the City Council to implement the legislation in the areas that are most affected by the rental issues.
- Ms. Beverly Aarons asked about anti-price gouging laws that exist in California. The City of Seattle has a housing crisis and why not raise the question or introduce anti-price gouging laws in Seattle. Mr. Cawthon shared that it has to be presented in a statewide level.
- There is a current law requiring landlords give 60-day notification if rents are increased more than 10%. Ms. Aarons noted if such language can be tied to rent stabilization and rent control. There is already a law that restricts how notifications around rent. Use the laws that currently exist to further control how rent price is increased and attach a penalty if any violations occur.
- Ms. Westgren commented that the Rental protection group is doing data analysis on the notice and if it can be extended from 60 to 90 days.

### **Public Comments (01:24:00)**

- Mr. Devin Silvernail of Be:Seattle commented that they are doing a Tenant's Rights Bootcamp at the Estelita's Library in Beacon Hill on Sunday at 2:00 pm. to teach the public and the neighborhood about their rights and issues that are happening around the City.

### **Work Group Report Out (01:34:15)**

- The **Housing Supply** group reported about Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit (DADUs). The group was invited by Councilmember Mike O'Brien's staff to discuss the pros and cons of building backyard cottages in the City. He asked the Commission to start a dialogue about backyard cottages as part of a possible solution to the housing crisis. Ms. Sheehan commented that Councilmember Mike O'Brien's staff approached her and decided rather that present it to the entire Commission is to go and present it to the Housing Supply group. The goal is to have a full presentation to the Commission in the fall.
- The **Rental Protection Laws** group reported about allowing more notices to renter's regarding rental increases. Currently, the renters were allowed 60 days of notice as a standard while other cities provide 90 days. The group also reported that some cities are amending their Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance (TRAO) or similar type of laws that provide renters assistance for economic evictions. The City of Seattle provides renters assistance for renters that were evicted because their building occupancy must be torn down. One of the City Council member is exploring amending the TRAO to include it.
- The **Outreach** group reported that they are continuing to explore various strategies on how to do extended outreach whether holding neighborhood meetings, invitations to the Commissions meeting, communicating through electronic feedback, etc. Ms. Sumner commented that she has been working and contacting various groups and organizations about their outreach strategies and possible partnership and she will share them to the Commission. Ms. Sheehan added that she was working with OCR, OHS and SDCI regarding renter protection and outreach. At the next meeting, these groups would like to gather feedback from the Commission on how they can do a better and effective outreach to the communities.
- The **Rent Stabilization/Rent Control** group reported that they are continuing to research about the relationship between rents and wages. Mr. Cawthon commented that he supports integrating the anti-price gouging laws into any rent control proposals that protects the renters and maintain and stabilizing rent prices.

### **Commissioner Opportunity to Share (01:51:04)**

- Ms. Sumner mentioned that on Thursday, June 28<sup>th</sup> from 2:00-4:00 pm at the Arc of King County will be hosting a policy recommendation meeting for the Council regarding people with disabilities, homelessness and renting through equity. She encourages the Commission to come and attend and provide any public comments.
- Ms. Aarons mentioned that she met a Native American woman who has tremendous knowledge and insights about Native American housing issues and she worked with different organizations about this issue and she would like to have an opportunity to invite and speak at this Commission. She also shared that she noticed an uncivil behavior toward a minority at a bus transportation. She mentioned that a lot of minority renters use the bus for public transportation and this is a quality of life and social justice issue.
- Ms. Lopez suggested expanding the Commission's outreach and educate Commercial Corporate partners regarding the language on building homeless encampment versus building tiny homes village for low income individuals.
- Ms. Westgren mentioned that Bellwether Housing is going to present a topic about the biggest barriers on building affordable housing and in late July or early August, and she will pass the information as soon as she gets more information.

### **Adjourn**

Ms. Sheehan reminded the Commission that the next meeting will be on Thursday, June 28<sup>th</sup> at the Boards and Commissions Room. No further business being before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:56 p.m.