

**SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Thursday September 6, 2018
6:00 – 8:00 PM
Seattle City Hall, Rm 473 DON Conf Room
Approved October 1, 2018

Commissioners Present: Farah Ali, Beverly Aarons, Clifford Cawthon, David Mooney
Laurie Rocello Torres, Jessica Westgren

Commissioners Absent: Daniella Lopez, ChrisTiana Obey Sumner, Michael Padilla Ocampo,

Commission Staff: Maureen Sheehan, Department of Neighborhoods

Guests: Sherry Collier, Calvin Jones

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

Welcome

- Ms. Laurie Rocello Torres opened the meeting. Brief introductions followed.
- Ms. Torres mentioned that Commissioner Sherry Collier's was not reappointed by Mayor Durkan. Ms. Torres added that she drafted a letter voicing the Commission's disappointment about this development.
- Ms. Collier commented that she should have been reappointed back in February. She has been working for the Commission without a reappointment and it became clear that she will not be reappointed by the Office of the Mayor. She added that she was frustrated by the lack of transparency and communication from the Mayor's Office about the situation and she decided to resign from her position as Commissioner.
- The Commission members that were present were disappointed and frustrated and commented that Ms. Collier is owed an explanation.
- Ms. Sheehan noted that Ms. Collier's seat is vacant, and it has not been filled by the Mayor's Office.
- There was a motion to have the discussion about the draft letter be revisited later at the meeting and move the public comment ahead of the agenda, and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion passed.

Minutes Approval

- There was a motion to adopt the August 6, 2018 minutes and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion was adopted.

Announcements

- Ms. Sheehan shared that City Council will be appointing Mr. Calvin Jones as a Commissioner in the coming weeks.
- City Council will be confirming Laurie Goff (Mayoral appointee), Marci Taitt-Lamar (Commission appointee), and Devin Silvernail (Commission appointee) at committee next week. With Sherry's resignation, there is 1 mayoral-appointee vacancy.

- She introduced Ms. Farah Ali as the new Get-Engaged Commissioner.
- Ms. Sheehan commented that according to the by-laws, co-chairs are elected for a one-year term and the current co-chairs term expires at the end of September. The Commission needs to elect new co-chairs at the October meeting.
- Ms. Torres commented that the duties of a co-chair involves facilitation of the monthly meetings, attend agenda setting meetings, responding to as needed phone calls and meeting with different organizations, supporting the Commission working groups, and providing a report to the City Council.
- Due to scheduling and other work commitments, she decided that it will be best for her and to the Commission to serve as a contributing member instead of a co-chair for the upcoming term.

Discussion: By-laws Laws – Absences & Co-chairs

- The Commission discussed about the parameters around excused and non-excused absences as well as advanced notification.
- Ms. Sheehan noted that the Commission proposed the following language: *“any member may request an excused absence from a Commission meeting. To request an excused absence, it should require a minimum of 24-hour notice with an exception of an emergency that will be determined on a case by case basis per the discretion of Commission leadership.”*
- Ms. Sheehan also mentioned that the Seattle Renters’ Commission shall elect two co-chairs by majority vote and each should be elected annually.
- There was a motion to adopt the revised by-laws as stated and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion passed.

Public Comments

- Ms. Marguerite Richard of the Seattle Poverty Network commented that she felt disenchanted on what she heard about Commissioner Collier and how she was treated as a black person. She voiced her outrage and concern about how Commissioner Collier was treated by the City. She also commented about some of the neighborhood buildings are not being maintained especially for the most vulnerable and her experience of being retaliated by the Seattle Housing Authority on the comments she posted about the housing issues.
- Mr. Alex Zimmerman commented about his proposition on his website to make the housing crisis works better. He added that the current situation presented by the City Council is not working with regards to discrimination, taxes, etc.
- Ms. Clarissa Jarem commented that a few months ago she and others started a group called ACC Tenant’s Association to expose on what was happening at the U District apartments that were bought by ACC. There were many complaints about the unfair and illegal practices that ACC imposed on the residents of the apartment including raising rental fees without notice, making threats and targeting people of color. She added that she wants this Commission to be aware of what is happening.

Work Group Report Out/Work Time

- The Commission continued to work on a draft letter to send to the Mayor’s Office and the City Council regarding Commissioner Sherry Collier’s reappointment.
- Ms. Westgren made a motion to adopt and submit the letter to the Mayor’s Office and it was seconded by Mr. Jones. The Commission voted, and the motion passed unanimously.
- The Commission discussed strategies to directly impact the Mayor and the City Council such as conducting a sit-in at the lobby at City Hall.
- Ms. Sheehan noted that the letter will have to go through the Director of DON before being sent to the Mayor’s Office on Monday, September 10.

- Ms. Torres suggested Commissioners attend the Human Services, Equitable Development, and Renter Rights Committee meeting on Tuesday, September 11 for the appointment of new Commission members, and voice their opinion about Commissioner Collier during public comment.

Commissioner Opportunity to Share

- Ms. Westgren shared that she received a scholarship for YIMBY Town (Yes in My Back Yard) to attend a four-day conference at Cambridge with the housing advocates from across the nation and Canada. The discussion will also focus on race and social equity and how the medium size cities deal with backyard cottages.
- Mr. Jones shared the decision by King County Council on how to spend the \$180 million from lodging tax revenue. The Council decided to allocate \$135 million to Safeco Stadium maintenance and the remaining amount to affordable housing.
- Ms. Sheehan mentioned that the proposed Fort Lawton Development plans will be presented at the Office of the Hearing Examiner later this month.

Adjourn

- No further business being held before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:58 pm.