

**SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

Monday, January 6, 2020  
6:00 – 8:00 PM  
Seattle City Hall, L280 Boards & Commissions Room  
Approved February 3, 2020

**Commissioners Present:** Dinah Braccio, Laurie Goff, Calvin Jones, Marci Taitt-Lamar,  
Daniela Lopez, Mac McGregor, Regina Owens  
Jessica Westgren

---

**Commissioners Absent:** Beverly Aarons (EA), David Mooney (EA), Devin Silvernail (EA),  
Felicia Turner-Murphy (EA), Christiana Obey Sumner (A)

---

**Commission Staff:** Vera Njuguna, Department of Neighborhoods  
Shaquan Smith, Department of Neighborhoods

**Guests:** None

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

**Welcome & Announcements**

- Ms. Jessica Westgren opened the meeting.
- The agenda for tonight's meeting is to review and provide feedback to the survey, discuss the current work plan and have the nominations and election of co-chairs.

**Minutes Approval (01:03)**

- There was a motion to approve the December 2 minutes, and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion was adopted unanimously.

**Public Comments (01:16)**

- Ms. Westgren opened the discussion for public comments.
- Kate Ruben commented that she will be taking over Mr. Devin Silvernail's work at Be:Seattle organization.

**Renters' Commission Survey Feedback (02:00)**

- Ms. Westgren commented about receiving good feedback about the accessibility of the survey.

- Mr. Calvin Jones explained the survey was created via Google Form. The goal of the survey is to ask City of Seattle renters a series of questions about their experience and challenges of being a renter in Seattle.
- The survey was a result of the work by the Outreach Group to inform renters that a Renters Commission exists to advocate for their concerns to the Mayor and City Council.
- Ms. Westgren commented about making the survey questions more accessible to people from various ethnic and economic backgrounds.
- Ms. Westgren also commented that for the race identifying question, to include an option for 'other' in order to collect more disaggregated data on race.
- A comment was made to include a question as to whether landlords are following ADA guidelines for renters with disabilities.
- A comment was made about addressing immigration status. If there is a question about immigration status, a disclaimer should be added to note that the survey will not share status information.
- Ms. Westgren commented about finding out if renters are renting with subsidies or not since there are renters that face challenges around subsidies.
- Mr. Jones commented that he received excellent feedback about the survey. The goal is to resend the survey for another round of feedback before it gets published at the next month's meeting.
- A comment was made about the progress regarding the Commission's own dedicated email address and voice message.
- Ms. Njuguna noted that she is checking with the Communications Team at DON about business cards and any existing template materials from other Boards and Commissions at the City. Regarding the email address, she added that renters' emails can be forwarded to the Outreach Team for follow-up.
- Mr. Smith added that it is up to the Commission on how to respond to the messages from the public as long as it is agreed upon and consistent.
- A comment was made that when communicating with renters, to reiterate that the Commission does not have the authority to discuss or recommend criminal or legal action.
- Ms. Njuguna noted that renters can submit their questions to the Commission via the email address that is available at the Renters Commission website.
- A comment was made that there should be a standard response for anyone that is corresponding to the Commission via email. Any response should be consistent with the role of the Commission.
- A comment was made about not having this Commission overextend its commitment to the everyday issues the renters face. It is important to clarify and communicate the role of this Commission to the renters and to public and acknowledge that there are several services within the City that can assist renters further with their concerns and issues.
- Ms. Westgren suggested that she will meet with the Renters Protection and Outreach group to discuss producing a draft about outreach and resources that are available for the renters and present it to this Commission for feedback.

#### **Co-chair Re-election (41:33)**

- Ms. Westgren briefly summarized the roles and responsibilities of a co-chair. She added to expect about 3-4 hours of work per month in addition to the monthly Commission meeting.
- The Commission decided to move the nominations and election of the co-chair to the February meeting.

#### **2020 Work Plan (53:11)**

- Ms. Westgren commented about revisiting the list of issues each of the workgroups would want to prioritize for 2020. The following workgroups are Rent Stabilization/Rent Control, Housing Supply, Renters Protection, and Outreach Strategies.

- The Committee discussed potential discussion items added to the work plan including more focus on racial equity and diversity, challenges of immigrant families facing around renting, multi-family tax exemptions, public housing, credit check protections, etc.
- Ms. Westgren commented that each workgroup needs to reassess its current work and identify actionable work that can be presented to the Mayor and the City Council.
- A comment was made that having a clear understanding of the history of race and social justice is important during the onboarding process of new Commissioners.
- A comment was made about reviewing the list of bullet points from the previous work plan and identify if any of the items are already completed.
- Mr. Smith noted that there is no specific timeline to finalize the 2020 work plan.
- Ms. Westgren suggested continuing these conversations at next month's meeting among the different workgroups to reassess their discussion priorities and prepare for more discussion.

#### **Commissioner Opportunity to Share (1:52:14)**

- Ms. Westgren shared about the statewide dog breed ban. Dog owners in Washington State can no longer be denied if they can prove that their dog breed is well-behaved based on the American Kennel Club's Canine Citizen Program.
- Ms. Westgren shared that the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) has been approved by the Growth Management Hearing board.
- Mr. Jones shared an article that the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd notified the 22<sup>nd</sup> and Union Tiny House Village to vacate their property by January 31<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Jones mentioned that he wrote a statement requesting the Church to delay until the end of the winter season. He asked the Commission to read and review the statement for any comments or feedback and approval before he sends it to the Church.
- Ms. Braccio shared that the WA Low Income Housing Alliance will be hosting a Housing and Homeless Advocacy Day on Monday, February 3 at the State Legislature in Olympia, WA. Ms. Njuguna mentioned that any immediate letters for a press release by the Commission need to go through the DON Director. Certain procedures need to be followed that can impact the timing for press release.

#### **Adjourn**

- No further business being held before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned.