

**SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Monday, June 3, 2019

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Seattle City Hall, L280 Boards & Commissions Room

July 1, 2019

Commissioners Present: Beverly Aarons, Farah Ali, Calvin Jones, Marci Taitt-Lamar, Daniela Lopez, David Mooney, Regina Owens, Jessica Westgren

Commissioners Absent: Laurie Goff (A), Michael Padilla Ocampo (A), Devin Silvernail (EA), ChrisTiana Obey Sumner (EA)

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

Guests: *Mr. Brennon Staley, OPCD*
Mr. Terique Scott, Balancing Our Tax Code

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. Brief introductions followed.

Minutes Approval

- There was a motion to adopt the May 6, 2019 minutes as amended, and it was seconded. The Committee voted, and the motion was adopted.

CM Mosqueda Notice Requirements for Renters Letter (00:52)

- Comments
- Ms. Westgren informed the Commission that she received a letter from Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda. She read and shared the letter with the Commission.
- Councilmember Mosqueda's office plans to meet with the Commission to further discuss the letter. The meeting date is to be determined.
- Ms. Westgren asked the Commission to send her any questions they may have so she can bring it to the meeting.

OPCD State of the Housing Market (06:52)

Mr. Brennon Staley, Office of Planning & Community Development

- Mr. Staley presented on the state of the housing market, which seeks to expand the range of housing options available to meet the diverse needs of people. "Housing Choices," the term coined for the project, is not yet public. He added that he is presenting this to the Commission as a preview to start the conversation before it goes public.

- He introduced the various data and analyses that summarizes the housing stock, affordability of rental housing and units, homeownership and for-sale units built, the supply of accessible housing, and the types of housing in short supply.
- A comment was made if there is an intention to update the data around which homes are deemed accessible, and Mr. Staley responded that the US Census has broad nationwide data about accessible units. The City of Seattle has never done a specific survey on accessible units.
- A comment was made about having the five housing types, that are in short supply, to be affordable. Mr. Staley noted that the Housing Choices is one of many options the City is looking to implement. The goal is to increase the supply of market-rate housing and options built on MHA (Mandatory Housing Authority), and the City is trying to increase the supply of affordable housing.
- A comment was made to inquire if there is a target goal on affordable. Mr. Staley noted that four years ago, under the previous administration, the goal was to produce 20,000 new rent income restrictive units over ten years, which was a very ambitious goal. The City is currently not on track to reach the goal, but it is close.
- A comment was made around public lands and if Housing Choices will address the sale or use of public lands. Mr. Staley responded that on average, land is only 15% of construction cost, which is not a huge component. Housing Choices is not going to work on publicly owned land because it does not address the market-rate housing project. The City goes through a rigorous process to clear land, and the priority is to have land for affordable housing.
- Mr. Staley mentioned that they would be launching a survey in the coming months to promote and get feedback on Housing Choices.
- OPCD will be hosting small group conversations and presentations to community groups about Housing Choices between June and November.
- Mr. Staley asked for feedback from the Commission before November.

Balance Our Tax Code (43:22)

Mr. Terique Scott

- Balance Our Tax Code is a coalition of unions, community leaders, organizations, educators, and family leaders working together to fix the tax code. Mr. Scott presented as the Outreach Director for this organization.
- The organization is advocating to have a capital gains tax, which will be a tax on the profits from stocks and bonds for the wealthy.
- He noted that ending the capital gains tax break would provide revenue to assist working families in paying their expenses such as rent and fund to build affordable housing.
- This capital gains tax applies to wealthy individuals and couples on their profits on stocks and bonds. Small businesses are exempt from this tax.
- Mr. Scott added that he is willing to attend future Commission meetings to provide more details and present further on this issue.
- A comment was made about how this is related to the work of the Commission. Mr. Scott responded that the funds generated from the tax that a working family will receive could assist in paying their monthly rent and expenses. Balancing Our Tax Code deals with the financial aspect and financing products for renters to afford housing, which has a nexus to work focused on by the commission. Mr. Jones asked why the coalition is only going after capital gains tax and not income tax, and Mr. Scott responded that lobbying for state income tax is very unpopular. The capital gains tax has been discussed in Olympia for 14 years, and it has been unsuccessful at being passed by the State Assembly. Thus, this is a great opportunity to bring the issue back again.

ADU/DADU Letter Draft Statement (1:09:07)

- Comments
- Ms. Westgren read the draft statement and mentioned that the Housing Supply group did some edits to the letter. Mr. Jones commented that an issue that was not discussed in detail is about the parking requirements.
- Ms. Westgren mentioned that they met with Mr. Nick Walsh of OPCD and had a good conversation about the issues around ADU/DADU.
- The Housing Supply group take away from the conversation is that it is more profitable to build a stand-alone house and sell them as opposed to building a house with an ADU.
- Ms. Aarons expressed concerns regarding properties being purchased as a means for extra income or tenants being priced out of their homes at exuberant rates.
- The Housing Supply group commented that as per Mr. Walsh, the measure is not strictly focused on affordable housing, but rather creating a larger housing supply.
- Additionally, Ms. Aarons expressed concerns over supporting the ADU/DADU statement considering that the protections for tenants under the civil rights fair housing act do not apply to ADUs, which would lead to racial discrimination impacting the type of housing marginalized communities have access to.
- Ms. Westgren responded that ADUs would go for zero rent for family members and aging parents but did not have hard data from Mr. Walsh's presentation to share with the commission in time for the June 11th public comment meeting.
- Ms. Owens expressed concerns over property owners choosing who can and cannot rent the units.
- Ms. Westgren responded that as part of the protection law, if the landlord lives on site, they have the right to choose who can rent their units. If they don't live on site, they would have to follow the fair housing laws, as any other Seattle landlord.
- There was a motion to approve the draft letter, and it was seconded. Mr. Jones, Ms. Taitt-Lamar, Ms. Lopez, Mr. Mooney, and Ms. Westgren voted by majority vote to pass the motion. Ms. Aarons and Ms. Owens opposed the vote.
- Ms. Westgren asked Ms. Njuguna to send the draft letter for public comment, and Ms. Njuguna will follow up if there are any questions.
- Ms. Westgren suggested having the Renter's Protection group discuss the issues raised in order to pass the regulations.

Public Comments (1:22:28)

- There were no public comments.

Work Group Report Out/Work Time (1:22:42)

- Ms. Lopez mentioned the removal procedures of a Commissioner due to lack of attendance.
- The Commission had a discussion on the specific language and clarity around allowable excused vs. unexcused absences on a twelve-month period as well as the threshold for these absences.
- The Commission also discussed updating the language around the bylaws that reflect changes in the Commissioner removal process.
- There was a motion to vote on the language added to the bylaws regarding allowable absences before a Commissioner is removed from the Commission and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion passed. The Commission decided to table the discussion for the July meeting.
- **Renter Protection Laws** reported that the group did not have a meeting this month. Ms. Aarons reported that the California Assembly passed a rent cap bill on May 29th that limits the annual rent hike for properties not covered by local rent control laws. Ms. Westgren reported that she received

the 14-day notice payer vacate approved, and the landlord lobbyists had already presented to the landlords on how to navigate around this law.

- **Outreach** reported that they met in early May and discussed the social media channels that the group and the Commission can access. Ms. Njuguna reported that she is also discussing with DON's Communication Team, and she will provide an update at the July meeting.
 - Mr. Jones reported about elevating the renter's voices and their stories so that they could be heard. He mentioned having several coffee chats or open office hours in which the community could participate.
 - Ms. Aarons suggested reaching out to the Tenant's Union to solicit their stories.
 - Mr. Smith mentioned that he set up a Google Calendar for the Renter's Commission activities and asked the Commissioners to send him these events so he can add them to the calendar and reach out to DON's Community Engagement Coordinator.

Commissioner Opportunity to Share (1:50:49)

- Ms. Westgren mentioned that several Commissioners suggested and asked to have the public comment period at the beginning of the meeting.
- There was a motion to have the public comment item for the first 15 minutes of the agenda, and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion was approved.
- Ms. Owens shared about the other piece of the 14-day law that judges will now have the discretion to negotiate between the tenant's and landlords when they think there is a cause to negotiate, so the tenant does not get evicted.
- Ms. Owens commented about which subgroup she would be part of when she came aboard, and Ms. Westgren mentioned that she would have a discussion with the subgroups and have this resolved.

Adjourn

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