

**SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

Monday, May 6, 2019

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Seattle City Hall, L280 Boards & Commissions Room

Approved June 3, 2019

**Commissioners Present:** Beverly Aarons, Laurie Goff, Calvin Jones, Marci Taitt-Lamar, Daniela Lopez, Devin Silvernail, Jessica Westgren

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**Commissioners Absent:** Farah Ali (EA), David Mooney (EA), Michael Padilla Ocampo (A) Regina Owens (A), Christiana Obey Sumner (A)

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

**Guests:** Ms. Leslie Brinson, Mayor's Office

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

**Welcome & Announcements**

- Ms. Jessica Westgren opened the meeting. Brief introductions followed.
- Ms. Sheehan announced she is transitioning her staff liaison role for the Renter's Commission to Ms. Vera Njuguna and Mr. Shaquan Smith.

**Minutes Approval**

- There was a motion to adopt the April 1, 2018 minutes as amended, and it was seconded. The Committee voted, and the motion was adopted.

**Commission Membership: Laurie Rocello Torres (02:12)**

- Ms. Westgren commented that she sent several emails to Commissioner Torres regarding her status and interest to the Commission with no response.
- Ms. Sheehan mentioned that Councilmember Sawant's office has someone interested in filling the role if the Commission decided to recommend removing Commissioner Torres.
- Ms. Lopez is currently working on policy and procedure update on how the Commission will handle any absenteeism from the Commission meeting in the future.
- There was a motion to recommend Commissioner Laurie Rocello Torres be removed from the Renters Commission due to absenteeism from the Commission meetings, and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion passed.
- Ms. Sheehan added that she will work with Ms. Njuguna to determine the next steps and process to fill the vacancy.

### **Mayor's Office Renter Focused Initiatives (15:20)**

*Ms. Leslie Brinson, Policy Advisor, Mayor's Office*

- Ms. Brinson mentioned that Mayor Jenny Durkan signed an Executive Order to increase affordability and address residential displacement.
- The Executive Order laid out the Mayor's policies and the desire for the work to be done and enable different City Departments' multiple efforts to merge into one comprehensive strategy.
- The issue came about because the Office of Housing has been working with the community on the Community Preference Policy.
- The Office of Housing works with creating affordable housing in and across the City, including the high-risk area of displacement and in areas of the City that are not gentrifying quickly.
- The Office of Housing is finding that as they work primarily in the Central and International District, specific organizations want to put preferences in places that they can house people directly from the community.
- The Community Preference Policy is being transmitted to City Council this week, in partnership with Councilmember Lisa Herbold; and will be done on a case by case basis.
- For example, if a project is located in an area with high-risk of displacement, the project sponsor and/or developer/property owner can put a policy in place that states that they want to help the people in the building, and 25% of units will be set aside for people coming from the direct neighborhood.
- Office of Housing is pairing with an Affirmative Marketing Plan with the effort that buildings must go through to make sure that their marketing goes through all channels and not just the mainstream media.

### **ADU/DADU Letter Draft Statement (1:10:28)**

- Mr. Jones provided a quick summary of the draft statement.
- The Commission suggested making minor language changes on the homeowner occupancy requirements and Airbnb.
- There was a motion to approve the draft letter to share, and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion passed unanimously.
- Ms. Sheehan commented that she will work with Ms. Njuguna of getting the letter to the Mayor and City Council's Office as well as the Communications Team at DON for posting and press release at the DON website.

### **Public Comments (1:28:42)**

- There were no public comments.

### **Work Group Report Out/Work Time (1:28:48)**

- **Rent Stabilization/Rent Control** reported that members of the group were invited to a City Council meeting to discuss the 180-day notice for a rent increase and Rent Control letters to Councilmember Kshama Sawant of the Human Services Equitable Development Committee. Mr. Silvernail also commented that both letters received good media and press attention. He added that there is excitement about the traction both issues have received.
- **Renter Protection Laws** reported that the group will have their next meeting on Monday and will provide an update at the June meeting.
  - Ms. Sheehan commented that if a Council member reached out to the Commission, the staff liaisons should be included to prevent any duplication of efforts, since the Commission is both accountable to the Mayor and City Council's office.

- Ms. Westgren mentioned that the letter they received from Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda's office is about thanking the Commission's work as well as a collaboration that involves renters getting an appropriate amount of time to collectively purchase properties before it goes to the developers. This may be a good collaboration between Housing Supply and Renter's Protection group. She added that she will be drafting a response to Councilmember Mosqueda's office.
- Mr. Silvernail commented about keeping the momentum going and suggested reaching out to the community after office hours. It would be an opportunity to talk to renters and get feedback. Ms. Sheehan noted that it is not an expectation or requirement for a Committee member to go and talk to renters after office hours.
- A comment was made about identifying calendar events within the City that the Commission can participate and be actively involved in reaching out to renters.
- Ms. Westgren suggested continuing the outreach conversation at the next meeting.

**Commissioner Opportunity to Share (1:52:15)**

- Ms. Westgren shared about an event at the Panama Hotel on Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm at the Tea & Coffee House. *The Urbanist* invited the Renter's Commission as guest speakers to talk about the Commission's work and affordable housing.
- Ms. Westgren shared that next week is Affordable Housing Week and she is several events that are happening around the City. If anyone is interested in going to these events, she will provide more information.
- Mr. Jones shared a public meeting about Fort Lawton on Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm at City Hall.
- Mr. Jones shared that there will be an open house on Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm at Ballard VFW Hall to discuss a parcel of land at Interbay that the State is giving to the City for affordable housing.
- Mr. Silvernail shared about the group he is part of will be doing Door Knocking to talk to renters about rent control and provide an opportunity for people to sign a petition and be part of the rent control conversation. The group will begin tomorrow at 6:00 pm and on Saturday at 11:00 am in from of their office at 12<sup>th</sup> and Pine.
- Ms. Aaron shared about a cohort called BASE (Building Arts Space Equitably). These group comes together as artists, renters and are working with developers and the Office of Arts & Culture to brainstorm on how to prevent art space and artist displacement in the City.

**Adjourn**

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