

**SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Monday, October 1, 2018

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Seattle City Hall, L280 Boards & Commissions Room

Approved November 5, 2018

Commissioners Present: Farah Ali, Lauri Goff, Daniela Lopez, David Mooney,
Michael Padilla Ocampo, Devin Silvernail, ChrisTiana ObeySumner
Jessica Westgren

Commissioners Absent: Beverly Aarons, Clifford Cawthon, Marci Taitt-Lamar,
Laurie Rocello Torres

Commission Staff: Maureen Sheehan, Department of Neighborhoods

Guests: *Andres Mantilla, Director, Department of Neighborhoods*
Xochtil Maykovich, Seattle Women's Commission
Edmund Witter, Housing Justice Project

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

Welcome & Introduction of New Commissioners

- Ms. Maureen Sheehan opened the meeting. Brief introductions followed.

Discussion: Commission Appointments

- Ms. Sheehan introduced Mr. Andres Mantilla to briefly discuss Ms. Sherry Collier's resignation from the Seattle Renter's Commission. Mr. Mantilla acknowledged that the process was not ideal, and he understood the frustration of this Commission.
- He noted that there should be a better understanding with the Mayor's Office on Commission appointments and reappointments. He added that there was a communication gap and will continue to work with the Mayor's Office to ensure that the process was transparent and was communicated in a timely and efficient manner.
- He commented that the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) supports the work of this Commission and will continue to work as partners to solicit and collaborate on ideas, answer specific questions, raise issues and concerns regarding renters.
- Mr. Calvin Jones asked if there was a mixed signal from the Mayor's Office, and Mr. Mantilla responded that when Mayor Jenny Durkan came into office, there was a backlog in Commission appointments. The Mayor had a different timeline regarding Commission appointments and at the end of the day, it was the Mayor's decision to make appointments. Ms. Sheehan noted that Ms. Collier's remained and continued to act and engaged as a Commissioner without any formal Commission appointment from the Mayor's Office.
- Mr. Mantilla commented that the Mayor's Office assured him and is committed to an effective, transparent, and accountable process for all Commissions.

- Ms. Jessica Westgren commented her frustration with the appointment process and asked on how to prevent this in the future, and Mr. Mantilla recognized the Commission's frustrations, and that he will take the responsibility for communicating these issues directly to the Mayor's Office and to advocate a clear process that works for both sides.

Minutes Approval

- There were motions to adopt the August 6, 2018 and September 6, 2018 minutes and they were seconded. The Commission voted, and the motions were adopted.

Action: Co-Chair Election

- The bylaws indicate the Commission has two co-chairs that work in tandem to run the meeting, put together agendas, work with the working groups and the Commission staff, etc.
- The Commission elected Ms. Jessica Westgren and Ms. ChrisTiana ObeySumner as Co-chairs for the next term effective tonight.

Briefing: Losing Home: The Human Cost of Eviction

Xochtil Maykovich, Seattle Women's Commission

Edmund Witter, Housing Justice Project

- Mr. Calvin Jones introduced Mr. Edmund Witter of the Housing Justice Project and Ms. Xochtil Maykovich of the Seattle Women's Commission to on the eviction data in Seattle, and how an eviction works.
- Mr. Witter noted that the Housing Justice Project provides eviction defense for tenants for all of King County and Ms. Maykovich mentioned that she belongs to an organization called the WA Community Action Network (CAN) that organizes on a variety of housing issues. She also is a Co-chair for the Seattle Women's Commission.
- Ms. Maykovich noted that they researched through the eviction records that were filed in Seattle in 2017. The goal was to identify the leading cause of eviction. She added that most evictions in Washington are not filed in the courts. The landlord starts the eviction process outside the court and when the tenants received the paperwork, they decide to leave.
- Mr. Witter mentioned that most eviction cases and filings begins when a tenant is a month on rent. When a rent is past due, the landlord must issue a three-day notice. The tenant has three days to pay the rent or vacate. The issue is done once the tenant pays the due amount. If the amount due is short, the eviction process proceeds and at that point, the landlord has no legal obligation to accept the payment. Once the three-days is up, a summons and complaint are filed, and the tenant has seven days to respond. The landlord can also file for an eviction hearing at the same time. The court hearing for an eviction is informal and has a very narrow scope that the court could consider.
- There was a comment that the reason for late payments are due to fixed income and asked if there are trends in the report that supports this, and Mr. Witter noted that it is a hard data point to capture that acknowledge that there were stressors happening.
- Ms. Westgren commented that there are non-profit organizations that provide rent payment assistance, but it takes weeks before the payments reach the landlord. Mr. Witter noted that the landlord's has discretion if they get contacted by these organizations regarding payments.
- There was a comment about the success rate of tenant's that have legal counsel, and Mr. Witter mentioned 23% of tenants that have counsel remain housed and 14% did not. Overall, tenants remain housed if there is legal counsel.
- There was a comment about any action that this Commission can follow-up regarding the report, and Ms. Maykovich noted that it is a budget session for the City of Seattle and it is important that resources for tenant education and outreach and legal services are important.

- Mr. Jones suggested the Commission draft a letter and statement in support of the work that is being done by this project and submit it to City Council.
- Ms. Maykovich noted that sending a letter would go far as well as asking the media to publicize the issue.
- Ms. Sheehan suggested they delegate someone to draft the letter. Mr. Jones and Ms. Lopez volunteered to do this. Mr. Jones commented that the letter should state that the current eviction data is not doing well and would encourage the City to devote financial resources on tenant outreach, legal services and eviction assistance.
- There was a motion that the Commission delegated Mr. Jones and Ms. Lopez to draft a letter and have Ms. Sheehan to send it to City Council, and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion was carried.

NPR Inquiry

- Ms. Sheehan mentioned that a reporter from NPR (National Public Radio) from Austin, TX will be coming to Seattle to report on housing affordability in the City of Seattle. The reporter has reached out to some of the Commissioners and may continue to reach out and interview other Commission members. The Commission agreed that individuals can speak with her, but only on their own experience and not speak for the Commission.
- Ms. Sheehan will do a follow-up with the reporter.

Public Comments (00:45:17)

- Ms. Westgren opened the discussion for public comments. There were no public comments.

Work Group Report Out/Work Time

- **Housing Supply** reported that they contacted Ms. Rachel Fyall, a University of Washington professor that knows more about affordability and housing and are waiting for a response.
- **Outreach & Engagement** reported that there will be an upcoming meeting on October 9th with SDCI to discuss their tenant and outreach strategies. The group also met with OPCD about Crown Hill to discuss their outreach strategies. The group also attended an equitable development initiative meeting that talked about the City's effort to grow in a racially equitable and social conscious way.
- **Rent Stabilization/Rent Control** reported there has not been any communication with the other members and they are planning meet soon.
- **Renter Projection** reported that the Source of Income Protection that began in Seattle is now officially statewide. Throughout the state of Washington, a person cannot not be discriminated against when using their housing voucher for housing. Ms. Sumner asked if it applies to disability and child support payments, and Ms. Westgren commented that it also applies if it is not illegal.

Commissioner Opportunity to Share

- There were no opportunities to share by a Commissioner.

Adjourn

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