

**SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Monday, January 7, 2019
6:00 – 8:00 PM
Seattle City Hall, L280 Boards & Commissions Room
Approved March 4, 2019

Commissioners Present: Beverly Aarons, Farah Ali, Clifford Cawthon, Laurie Goff
Marci Taitt-Lamar, Daniela Lopez, David Mooney
Michael Padilla Ocampo, Devin Silvernail, ChrisTiana Obey Sumner
Jessica Westgren

Commissioners Absent: Laurie Rocello Torres

Commission Staff: Maureen Sheehan, Department of Neighborhoods

Guests: Ms. Emily Alvarado, Office of Housing

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

Welcome & Announcements

- Ms. ChrisTiana ObeySumner opened the meeting.
- Ms. Maureen Sheehan reminded the members to update their annual acknowledgment of eligibility stating that they are currently a renter in the City of Seattle. She also mentioned about a new sign-in sheet to track the monthly attendance meetings.

Minutes Approval

- There were motions to adopt the November 5, 2018 and December 3, 2018 minutes, and they were seconded. The Committee voted, and the motions were adopted.

Fort Lawton Redevelopment

Ms. Emily Alvarado, Office of Housing

- Ms. Alvarado is the manager of Housing and Equitable Development at the Office of Housing.
- The Commission and Ms. Alvarado had a back and forth discussion about the project with regards to the current legal challenges, the ongoing environmental impact studies process, affordability, homeownership education and assistance, different barriers and ways to successfully educate and advocate this project to the public.
- The next upcoming public comment on the plan will be in late February.

[Note: Ms. Jessica Westgren, Renters Commission co-chair, reminded about the Commission's work on transparency, open, honest and respectful dialogue, and being engage and present with all the members of this Commission. Commissioner Beverly Aarons asked the Commission to hear her grievance with Commissioner Calvin Cawthon. Commissioner Cawthon was given the opportunity to respond to Commissioner Aaron's statement.

The Commission decided that these internal issues should be handled outside the meeting and identify a possible internal conflict resolution or mediation process that all Commission members agree on.]

Commission Appointed Seats Re-appointments

- Ms. Sheehan mentioned that the Commission has two-Commission appointed seats. These commissioners are Ms. Marci Taitt Lamar and Mr. Devin Silvernail. Their terms are up for reappointment at the end of February. [Correction: both terms are not up for reappointment until February 2020]
- She asked the Commission to begin a conversation about a consistent reappointment process for the Commission-appointed seats.
- Mr. Westgren proposed and made a motion of creating an ad hoc workgroup to write policies and procedures on the reappointment of Commission-appointed seats, and it was seconded. The Commission voted, and the motion passed. The members of this work group include: Ms. Laurie Goff, Mx. ObeySumner, Ms. Farah Ali and Ms. Marci Taitt Lamar.
- The Commission voted by ballot and Mr. Devin Silvernail was reappointed as a Commissioner to be appointed by the Seattle City Council. Ms. Sheehan mentioned that she contacted Councilmember Kshama Sawant's office and all the appointments will be at their Committee's discussion in the following weeks.

2019 Work Plan

- Ms. Sheehan noted that the current workplan has not changed and she proposed having the existing 2018 workplan that has the workgroup assignments and focus on the topics and issues instead of the calendar schedule.
- Ms. Westgren suggested having each group outline their short, medium, and long-term goals as a starting point to prioritize the topics that needs to be discussed.

Public Comments

- Mr. Dmitri Groce commented that he was recently displaced from his home at Beacon Hill after a chronicle of retaliation from his landlord. He complained about the several compliance issues and he did not hear back from the landlord or inspections. He noted that the Local Just Cause ordinance has a loophole that only applies to month-to-month leases and it was problematic and no recourse to address or fight the retaliation from his landlord. He encourages this Commission to support the Housing Alliance around its legislative priorities to fix the Just Cause eviction loophole protection to the state legislation this year.

Work Group Report Out/Work Time

- **Housing Supply** reported that they met with Mr. David Neiman, an architect that builds micro housing to discuss the barriers of building the different types of housing due to regulations. The group will try to invite him to present at this Commission meeting with the goal of having the Commission draft a statement in support advocating regulation changes to build different types of affordable housing.
- Ms. Westgren added that the group would be drafting a letter of support of Fort Lawton to bring to the Commission at the next meeting. Ms. Sheehan suggested to the group to have all the draft documents be available and accessible to each work group in Google drive.
- **Outreach Strategies** reported that the group discussed reaching out to the renter advocacy groups that they could partner with and invite them to come to Commission meetings and present their experience working with renters. They are reaching out to groups and organizations that are culturally specific in certain neighborhoods.

- **Rent Stabilization/Rent Control** reported that Mr. Silvernail drafted a letter that is based on the research about rental hike notices. The work they did also ties with the Renter Protection group. The letter is like the memo that he wrote to the Committee last month about overhauling the timeline for receiving rental increase notices.
- Ms. Sheehan commented about having a briefing about the research to educate the Commission about the issue. If the group would like to pursue a briefing on their topic to reach out to her, and she can identify and invite the person to the briefing to the Commission, and have the co-chairs add them to the agenda.
- Mx. Obey Sumner agreed that having an initial briefing is beneficial and good practice in order to digest the letter or memo into a presentation.
- **Renter Protection Laws** echoed the report that the Rent Stabilization/Rent Control group reported. The group commented about the process involved in having their work be presented to the full Commission and have a back and forth discussion and feedback before presenting it to the Mayor or City Council for response.

Commissioner Opportunity to Share

- Mx. Obey Sumner shared that the Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development & Arts (CRUEDA) Committee will be having a meeting tomorrow from 9 – 11 am. Councilmember Lisa Herbold will be presenting a draft resolution on evictions in response to the Women’s Commission eviction. The draft resolutions are to explore strategies, and exhibit legislative actions on financial hardships, domestic violence, understanding the eviction process, etc. Ms. Sheehan mentioned that DON has requested to talk to Councilmember Herbold about having this Commission get involved at the front end of these issues.
- Mr. Silvernail shared an upcoming tenant’s right workshop/boot camp in two weeks. The first event will be at High Point on January 26th. The next event will be at Capitol Hill on February 2nd at 4:00 pm. The start time for the High Point location event is to be determined.
- Mr. Ocampo mentioned that the Planning Commission came with a report about recommending the City to be more proactive in the zoning laws. He noted that the City is currently working on rezoning 6% of the single-family neighborhoods in Seattle. He noted that this will be a good opportunity for the Housing Supply and Renter’s Protection groups to work and draft statement to begin the conversation and have this Commission be on board.
- Ms. Westgren shared that State Representative Nicole Macri is advocating for a 3-day payer to vacate to 21-days for tenants. She added that eviction report by the Women’s Commission and Housing Justice Project is being taken seriously statewide.
- A comment was made if there are any updates from Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda’s office about the late fees that was presented by the Renters Protection group, and Ms. Sheehan mentioned that that there is interest to it and a decision will be made after the annual work planning retreat from Councilmember Mosqueda’s office.

Adjourn

- No further business being held before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.