

**SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

Monday, October 7, 2019

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Seattle City Hall, L280 Boards & Commissions Room

Approved December 2, 2019

**Commissioners Present:** Beverly Aarons, Laurie Goff, Calvin Jones,  
Marci Taitt-Lamar, Daniela Lopez, Mac McGregor, Regina Owens, Devin  
Silvernail, Felicia Turner-Murphy.

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**Commissioners Absent:** Michael Padilla Ocampo, Regina Owens, ChrisTiana Obey Sumner

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

**Guests:** Hilary Nichols, PACE Coordinator, Department of Neighborhoods

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

**Welcome & Announcements**

- Ms. Vera Njuguna welcomed the new Get Engaged commissioner Felicia Turner-Murphy to the meeting.

**Minutes Approval**

- There was a motion to adopt the August 5, 2019 and September 9, 2019 minutes at the October meeting, and it was seconded. The Committee voted, and the motion was adopted.

**Public Comments (02:59)**

- Mr. Devin Silvernail opened the discussion for public comments. There were no public comments.

**Aligning PACE Program & SRC Efforts (03:30)**

- Ms. Jessica Westgren and Ms. Beverly Aarons gave a general overview of the PACE program from a participant perspective that included their experience and lessons learned.
- Ms. Hilary Nichols introduced the PACE program by highlighting that it's a course that is offered three times a year with 4-hour workshops offered each Saturday.
- Ms. Nichols added that there are three main benefits to participating in the PACE program which include: understanding how the City of Seattle operates, community organizing and community building and networking with other community activists.
- She added that the pop-up workshop is a mobile and stand-alone model that incorporates the PACE curriculum to address gap areas of participants from communities of color and low-income communities.
- Recently, some commission members attended one of the pop-up workshops with residents of Lake City Court who had expressed issues with their property managers, cleanliness of their building and general health and safety of their surroundings.

- Ms. Nichols highlighted the value of SRC members' attendance at the workshop and the resources that they were able to share based on the residents' questions and needs.
- She added that based on SRC's outreach goals, she wanted to explore opportunities for additional pop-up workshops in collaboration with the PACE program.
- Ms. Westgren noted that for SRC to attend future PACE workshops, it's imperative to note that the commissioners are not in attendance to provide legal advice, but rather to listen to provide suggestions.
- Ms. Westgren added that in planning the workshops, it would be best to know ahead of time if PACE attendees will be conveying overall themes of community concerns or a specific individual issue.
- Mr. Devin stated that in terms of the structure of the workshop, and in efforts to give attendees equal opportunity to share, the program can start by highlighting the role of SRC and the City and thereafter follow up with break out groups based on issues the attendees would like to explore.
- Ms. Westgren suggested that the pop-up's can also focus on escalation techniques by providing resources and referrals on who certain issues should be escalated to for follow up.
- Ms. Aarons added that one key challenge for renters is not having adequate information from their property managers and full disclosure about their property and the tenants' rights.
- Mr. Calvin Jones noted that the workshops would serve as an opportunity to get feedback and stories from renters so as to elevate it to City officials.
- Ms. Westgren recommended that commissioners can also attend meetings with district representatives in Seattle to elevate renter stories in person. She added that it would also be a good opportunity to partner with the Office of Housing to conduct a workshop for their incoming tenants.
- Ms. Daniela Lopez added that it would also be an ideal model for tenants living in buildings that are being offered a tax credit to attend the workshops and also tailor resources to branches of government engaging with the communities most affected.
- Ms. Westgren summarized that Ms. Nichols can provide workshops based on tenant issues such as maintenance, health and security issues, retaliation and discrimination from management and other tenants. She added that providing resources for how to escalate those issues would be ideal.
- Ms. Laurie Goff stated that there is power in collecting stories and elevating it to city council in order to influence legislation. She also added that providing contact information as a resource is vital to attendees.
- Ms. Nichols closed by posing three areas for the commissioners to ponder before moving forward:
  - Outreach - which groups to communicate with? Is it a particular building? Or a particular demographic?
  - What stories are needed to be able to elevate the legislation concerns?
  - What can provide the baseline information?

### **Transit Riders Union ORCA for All Campaign**

- Mr. Calvin Jones stated that the Transit Riders Union (TRU) is a nonprofit that does advocacy work around transit affordability and access. TRU recently launched a campaign with the goal to require large employers in Seattle to subsidize transit passes for their employees.
- Mr. Jones's ask is for the SRC to sign on to the campaign because renters and low-income people are more likely to use public transport than homeowners and the subsidized transit passes will be beneficial for renters who work for large employers.
- Ms. Laurie Goff expressed concerns over parking spaces being taken away in Capital Hill to make way for bike lanes, which makes it difficult for those who need access to their cars.
- Ms. Beverly Aarons highlighted the safety risk experienced on public transportation and the need for people to evaluate utilizing a car or car service to avoid this risk. She stated it is imperative that the City and County enforce the law to make public transit safer.
- Mr. Mac McGregor added that bus drivers also need to feel protected and have access to assistance when needed.

- Mr. Devin Silvernail added that due to timing on which this topic was discussed, it can be continued at the next meeting with details added for clarity and statistical data on how renters were impacted by bike lanes. Ms. Westgren suggested reaching out to Commute Seattle for such data.

**Letter from residents re: Airbnb property violations (1:34:50)**

- Mr. Devin Silvernail suggested that the commissioners on the Renter's workgroup first evaluate the current Airbnb legislation to see if it could better utilize feedback from SRC.

**Commissioner Opportunity to Share**

- Ms. Beverly Aarons shared that the cap that the City put on increases for MFTE properties was very beneficial to her building considering that the landlord tried to raise the rent significantly.
- Ms. Jessica Westgren shared that Minneapolis will be getting rid of credit check for renters. She will be reviewing their ordinances to replicate and share with the SRC with the goal to pass it in Seattle. She added that additional protections have been passes in Seattle – one of which protects domestic violence and abuse survivors from being charged for apartment damages. Secondly, Seattle has made it illegal for tenants to pay electronically.
- Mr. Silvernail added that a survivor of domestic violence can move in with a family member and not be penalized for having too many people in the apartment.
- Mr. Calvin Jones shared that Kshama Sawant is holding a public hearing on October 17<sup>th</sup> to advocate for tiny houses to stay longer than their 2-year lease. This is a result of the Mayor wanting to cut their funding for the North Lake and Georgetown tiny houses.
- Given that a few members' terms will be ending in February 2020, staff liaisons will work with the City Council and Mayor's office to fill the vacant spots. Ms. Daniela Lopez suggested that it would be good to capture in writing lessons learned by the commissioners such as conflict resolution, how issues were elevated and the process of drafting letters for public release.
- Mr. Silvernail shared that the SRC's rent control legislation was shared at a previous meeting in September with the Human Services Equitable Development and Renter's Rights Committee in attendance, including additional 250 community members.
- He also added that on October 5<sup>th</sup>, the King County Council will be voting on a renters commission for King County. Commissioners were encouraged to attend and advocate for the commission.

**Adjourn**

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