

**RENT STABILIZATION COMMISSION
CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2020
WEST HOLLYWOOD PARK PUBLIC MEETING ROOM- COUNCIL CHAMBERS
625 NORTH SAN VICENTE BOULEVARD**

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Bergstein called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Commission said the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: Rent Stabilization and Commission Secretary Janene Sherrard took roll call.

PRESENT: Commissioner Karen O'Keefe, Commissioner Josh Kurpies, Commissioner Richard Maggio, Commissioner Garrett Charity, Vice Chair Agassi Topchian, Chair Robert Bergstein.

ABSENT: Commissioner Kellan Martz.

STAFF PRESENT: Rent Stabilization and Housing Manager Pete Noonan, Legal Counsel to the Commission Alison Regan, and Commission Secretary Janene Sherrard.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: A motion was made by Commissioner Charity to approve the agenda for the February 27, 2020 meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner O'Keefe. The motion was approved 6-0-0, with Commissioner Martz absent.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: A motion was made by Commissioner Charity to approve, with amendments, the minutes of the February 13, 2020 meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner O'Keefe. The motion was approved 6-0-0, with Commissioner Martz absent.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: There were no public comments.

MANAGER REPORT: Rent Stabilization and Housing Manager Pete Noonan reviewed the Look Ahead Calendar.

The discussion regarding broken elevators and discussion of the Rent Stabilization Ordinance Deposit Interest Formula are being moved to a future meeting.

The Rent Stabilization Commission meetings on March 26, 2020 and April 9th will be held in Fiesta Hall at Plummer Park.

Mr. Noonan discussed handouts provided to the Commissioners. These handouts included tenant and landlord newsletters, postcards providing an overview of rent control laws and information on the online landlord portal, and a public service flyer regarding the Corona Virus.

Chair Bergstein mentioned that the postcards also included a reminder of the 2020 Census.

Commissioner Maggio asked if there were still illegal and unpermitted dwellings. Mr. Noonan responded that there are still occasional unpermitted dwelling units.

Commissioner O’Keefe asked if there were any updates on the priorities of the Commission and if the City Council had addressed them. Mr. Noonan stated that the Commission priorities will be brought up at the next City Council meeting.

Commissioner O’Keefe asked if City Hall had plans to work remotely in case of the spread of the Corona Virus. Mr. Noonan responded that City Hall is monitoring the public health response and will follow the lead of the Los Angeles County Department of Health and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. He also stated that contingency plans are being developed.

Vice Chair Topchian asked if the postcards were available in Spanish and Russian. Mr. Noonan stated that postcards were currently only in English but would look into having the information printed in Spanish and Russian.

COMMISSION COMMENTS: Chair Bergstein indicated an article from Units Magazine on Work Force housing was included in the Commissioner handouts.

Chair Bergstein will be attending the Equality California conference on March 12th, 2020.

Chair Bergstein asked if there would be a quorum for the March 12,2020 Rent Stabilization meeting. Due to lack of quorum, the March 12th meeting was cancelled.

APPEAL:

D- 4249cd

1425 N. Crescent Heights Blvd, #108

Legal Counsel to the Commission Alison Regan provided a case summary and analysis of the appeal as provided in the staff report.

Jeff Berger, Tenant, spoke on the appeal.

Hannah Shidler, Representative for Roka Properties, spoke on the appeal.

Following deliberation, a motion was made by Vice Chair Topchian to adopt Resolution RSC 20-571 reversing the hearing examiner's decision. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Charity. The motion was approved by a vote of 6-0-0. Commissioner Martz was absent.

NEW BUSINESS:

Alison Regan presented a proposal to implement a tenant right-to-counsel initiative to provide legal representation to tenants facing eviction.

Commissioner Kurpies asked if the City pays Bet Tzedek for the services they currently provide. Ms. Regan confirmed that they are contracted by the City.

Commissioner Charity asked if the initial intake for the right-to-counsel would be performed by the City or an outside agency and whether the area median income was based on Los Angeles or West Hollywood. Ms. Regan stated that an outside agency would be the point of contact for the initial intake and that the City could look at using the West Hollywood Median Income.

Commissioner O'Keefe asked for more information about the rental assistance portion of the initiative and about fees for service for those with higher incomes. Ms. Regan stated that this initiative would expand the current rental assistance program and help prevent evictions by covering a tenant's financial short fall and that the fees for service would depend on the provider, but typically are on a sliding scale based on income.

After discussion, the Commission showed a consensus in favor of the proposal and of implementing a sliding fee scale for the provided services. Commissioners O'Keefe and Charity emphasized the importance of outreach and education, so tenants and landlords are aware of this program. Commissioner Bergstein suggested that the Council consider offering legal assistance to low-income landlords.

Chair Bergstein asked if the Rent Stabilization software program tracked the turnover of rent stabilized units. Mr. Noonan stated that he didn't believe that the current software provided this information. Mr. Noonan mentioned that an analysis done a couple of years ago showed that, once a unit turned over, the likelihood that the unit would turn over again increases.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Cynthia Chagolla, attorney at Bet Tzedek Legal Services, spoke about the services Bet Tzedek currently provides and how the right-to-

counsel initiative would enable them to provide additional legal assistance to tenants.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS: Commissioner Kurpies spoke about attending the Advanced Landlord Building Blocks session. He asked if a question about the number of units a property owner owns could be added to the questionnaire for future Building Block sessions.

STAFF COMMENTS: Mr. Noonan agreed with Commissioner Kurpies suggestion to add property owners and the number of units they own to the Building Blocks questionnaire. Mr. Noonan suggested that property owners could show the locations of the units they own on a map to give Rent Stabilization an idea of who and where they are assisting.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 p.m. The next meeting of the Rent Stabilization Commission will be a special meeting to be held at 7:00 p.m. on March 26, 2020 at Plummer Park – Fiesta Hall.

These minutes were submitted by Janene Sherrard, Commission Secretary, and approved by a motion of the Rent Stabilization Commission on this 26th day of March 2020.

A copy of the audio recording of this meeting can be obtained from the City Clerk’s office upon request. You may also view a video of this meeting at <http://www.weho.org/weho-tv/other-city-meetings>

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:


Robert Bergstein, Chair

DocuSigned by:


Janene Sherrard, Commission Secretary