

## Arlington County Tenant –Landlord Commission Meeting

### Meeting Minutes September 12, 2018

**Commissioners present:** Michael Campbell, Kirit Mookerjee, Kristin Clegg, Kendon Krause (Chair), Kellen MacBeth, Bismah Ahmed. **Absent:** Zachary Butler

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Kendon Krause.

#### **Public Comment:**

Mr. Alexndr Belinskiy commented on the need to create a TAF to avoid displacement of some very low-income tenants without Housing Choice Vouchers because of proposed rent increase. He speculated that rent increase could be 10% for tenants without rental assistance, and even more based on 2018 Rent limits. He added that tenants who had Arlington County Housing Grant are ineligible for TAF under the current policy.

Meeting notes Approval: Approval with minor corrections.

#### **Current Business: The Carlin Apartments Relocation Plan (Action)**

Florence Webb, Senior Development Project Manager of RHF (Retirement Housing Foundation), responded to questions about changes to the relocation plan following the recommendations of the commission, and clarified meeting with housing inspectors from the voucher program. Mr. Hector Mercado confirmed that the project is not eligible for a Tenant Assistance Fund (TAF), as rents will not increase. The commission voted unanimously to send a recommendation to the County Manager designee to approve the plan.

#### **Public Discussion Eviction Forum Follow Up - State wide issues related to evictions**

Ms. Jennifer Daniels, Housing Division introduced the evictions discussion outlining the issues and why it is now important to seek changes in the laws and necessary steps in assistance to minimize evictions in the commonwealth. She introduced the speakers Ms. Adele McClure, Outreach and Policy Director, VA Lt. Governor's Office and Ms. Nady Peralta, Staff Attorney, Legal Aid Justice Center.

Ms. McClure explained that, while Lt. Gov. Fairfax is not able to introduce legislation, he has been convening a series of discussions throughout the state to learn more. She indicated that the data on evictions showed a high eviction rate in Virginia. There have been discussions about the validity and parameters used to compile the information, but the problem does exist and the need for solutions is the next goal. Two potential solutions are being considered: the increase of affordable units and the increase of the minimum wage. Other potential solutions include prevention services, better information on resources (211), and new legislation in tenant landlord laws. The Virginia Housing Commission is comprised of state legislators and stakeholders, and also has a subgroup that is meeting to pursue legislation like short forms, a statewide eviction fund, and a state housing voucher program. She asked for input on needs and possible solutions for her to relay to the working group.

Ms. Peralta indicated that her primary legal focus is on undocumented immigrants. She is part of the legislative reform subgroup of the Campaign to Reduce Evictions, comprised of tenant and landlord representatives, attorneys and advocacy groups. The subgroup is developing a list of proposed recommendations; for example, that the Right of Redemption be allowed more than annually.

Commissioner Campbell raised the issue of tenants being unable to apply for assistance unless they have received a pay or quit letter, and expressed interest in intervention and literacy programs to assist tenants before the issue becomes an eviction. There was a discussion about assistance programs and the need to inform both tenants and landlords.

Other issues discussed included: repetitive filings for a hearing by landlord to accrue attorney fees, development of standard leases, termination notices, and other documents attached to the filing of the unlawful detainer. These clarifying documents can be helpful, particularly because not all evictions are due to non-payment of rent. They can also be due to breach of lease and refusal to vacate or termination of lease. Ms. Peralta indicated that the general idea is to discuss many options, and select a few that are acceptable both to tenants and landlords to take to the state level. Legislative options will be prepared during the fall.

### **Reports**

Chair Krause reminded members of the invitation for a commission member to be part of the SPRC (Site Plan Review Committee).

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.