

Arlington County Tenant Landlord Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 10.10.2018

Commissioners present: Kirit Mookerjee, Kellen MacBeth (Act. Chair), Bismah Ahmed, Matthew Whitfield, ESQ. **Absent:** Zachary Butler, Kristin Klegg, Michael Campbell, Kendon Krause

Meeting was called to order at 7:04 by Acting Chair, Kellen Macbeth.

Public Comment

Mr. Aleksandr Belinskiy commented that the approved Carlin Relocation Plan failed to provide sufficient details on rent increases during the renovation of the project and that the Commission should request additional information. He provided a graphic which detailed projected rent increases; and questioned how much of an increase in rent would take place prior to renovations and how this would possibly affect unassisted tenants. Commissioner Keller acknowledge the comment and recognized that related information had been requested of Florence Webb (representative of the Carlin) and that the Commission had limited power outside of requesting the information and noting the response. Commissioner Mookerjee commented that this can perhaps be provided as an update later in the process. Hector Mercado commented that the project receives federal funds and therefore increases will be controlled within relevant guidelines.

Approval of September Meeting Notes- several corrections were identified. “stakeholders” to replace “state holders”; ‘short forms” replace with “abbreviated forms”. Mr. Belinskyi requested that the meeting notes be amended to include his comments. This will be done.

New Commissioner: Matthew Whitfield, ESQ. serving as a Public Interest representative described his position at Legal Services of Northern Virginia where he serves as a Housing Attorney providing housing counselling and eviction prevention advice to clients.

Current Items

1. Arlington Landlord Partnership Agreement (ALP) (information item)

Kim Painter, Co-Chair of the Housing committee of the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness and Sara Thompson, DHS staff liaison presented information about the Arlington Landlord Partnership (ALP) program (two handouts were provided). The ALP program is intended to increase the availability of rental housing for homeless families and individuals who have high leasing barriers, often including poor credit, criminal history and evictions. The program is modelled after a similar program in Seattle, Washington. The partners in the program include nonprofit service providers, local landlords and property managers and DHS (Housing Assistance Bureau). The program was implemented in 2014 and has seed funding from several sources including Community Development Funds, Arlington Community Foundation and DHS. A critical element of the program is the case management provided to clients to enable them to remain housed and to provide some assurance to landlords. Since its inception, only 3 claims have been made against the fund and 35 households have been served. Clients are referred by participating organizations and are qualified by an evaluation committee for either rapid rehousing or permanent supportive housing. Some discussion about the program took place with several questions being raised. Such as the number of landlords involved and how this can be increased, since there are only 4 participating landlords – this was identified as a challenge, as some landlords were concerned

about potential fair housing violation. In response to a question about the availability of other financial assistance, Sara Thompson indicated that there are utility assistance and rent assistance funding available through other divisions in DHS. Commissioner MacBeth asked whether there was data from the program in Seattle and the impact of changes in the updated laws on source of income as a fair housing category.

Ms. Spencer a resident of Serrano apartments suggested that attention should be given to evictions at affordable housing properties to see the pattern and determine whether there was a problem, and if specific policies may be needed to address this. She observed that there was high resident turnover in the buildings and that improvements and condition of the properties varied by buildings.

2. Commission Outreach methods and materials

A discussion about what types of outreach methods and materials that will be effective to communicate to tenants and landlords a – what the Commission does and what resources are available for each group. It was pointed out that the needs of tenants and that of landlords are different so that materials and modes of communication should be developed for each audience.

- Resources – what resources are available to tenants and to landlords – list of county and community resources could be included in new tenant move-in packets. Resources for landlords, how best to share information
- Communicating with the Commission – other modes of communication other than the internet. Public comment period during meetings or other means online submission. Brochure is limited in content, perhaps can be expanded with sections specific to each audience. Ways to address tenant’s grievances.
- Renters forum – provide information on tenant’s rights. This is an idea to be developed. How best to reach tenants?

Reports:

Chair Report – to attend budget discussion on Oct 17. Met with Alliance for Housing Solutions to explore developing a relationship. Any issues that there can be points of collaboration and develop advocacy. Attended Missing Middle conversation on October 3.

Staff Report- Announcements LAIF Fair, Affordable Housing Month activities, Annual Affordable Housing Month report presentation.

Bugata Report – in conversation with AHC concerning various properties. Have new CEO who is working to change culture in the Management Company. Both parties together to discuss tenant issues. Working together to address issues at various properties. Issues are primarily, customer service, frequent staff turn- over, violation notices, building maintenance issues across several properties. Preliminary meeting held with AHC and requested that tenant meetings be reinstated to hear from tenants, for example at Harvey Hall, Gates of Ballston. Commissioner Macbeth suggested that Bu-gata work on providing a list of issues considered systemic across properties to inform AHC and share with the Commission. Saul Reyes, indicated that he will provide an update next month.

Meeting adjourned at 8:46.