

Arlington County Tenant Landlord Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 14, 2018

Commissioners present: Kirit Mookerjee, Bismah Ahmed, Mathew Whitfield, Esq., Zachary Butler, Christopher Bruno, Kristin Clegg, Michael Campbell, Kendon Krause (Chair). **Absent:** Kellen Macbeth

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

Public Comment

Pat Findikoglu, accompanied Adiba Hafiz, a tenant at the Odyssey, to discuss an issue involving the CAF unit that her family was renting. The managing member TB Ventures has informed CAF tenants that the units will no longer be “committed affordable” and will be charged full rent beginning in February 2019. Eric Timar (staff) provided the background to the building which concerned a change to the status of 21 CAF units CAF which had been granted through the site plan process in 2001. Since these units were granted through the site plan process this proposed change is receiving attention from the County Attorney’s office. It was brought to the attention of the Tenant Landlord Commission because tenants are likely to be displaced. Staff has provided tenants with a list of CAF apartments and Bu-Gata also offered assistance. Chair, Krause stated that she would write a letter to the Board Liaison about the matter.

Roberta Spence requested that the Tenant Landlord Commission make recommendation to the County Board to increase the housing grant allocation to seniors, as it has been stagnant for quite some time and rent prices are increasing. Commissioner Campbell was in support of this recommendation.

Alexandr Belinskiy presented information to support his concern for the potential effect of the cap imposed by the county, on rent increases for future non-assisted tenants at the Carlin. He suggests that the imposed caps should relate to inflation.

Approval of October Meeting Notes – several corrections were identified. Commissioner Campbell moved for acceptance of the minutes; which was seconded by Commissioner Ahmed. Commissioners Bruno and Chair, Krause abstained since they were absent.

Relocation Plans update – Staff, Hector Mercado provided a list of relocation plans approved since 2016 and an update on the status of each plan. He was asked how this list compared to previous years, with regard to the number of plans and also to comment on the ease of implementation across plans. Commission Mookerjee, relayed an inquiry from a Board member about Dominion Arms and renovations taking place there which had not appeared before the Commission. Mr. Mercado responded that the project was a by- right project and did not seek relocation assistance from the County. Mr. Belinskiy suggested that staff should provide information on the number of eligible tenants who return to the Westover project after renovations have taken place. Commissioner Clegg commented on the reasonableness of a relocation plan not being implemented for as much as two years after its approval. It was pointed out that since revisions of the relocation guidelines, this has been addressed by the 120- day timeframe.

Tenant Assistance Fund – Staff, Eric Timar provided a presentation on the Tenant Assisted Funds (TAF).

TAF is financial assistance provided by the County to tenants to offset the cost of increased rents at CAF properties that have undergone renovations or have been purchased to preserve affordability. TAFs are time limited one- time grants. The grants are sourced through Arlington’s Affordable Housing Investment Funds, but may be used at properties other than AHIF properties. Following the presentation, there were a few questions and some discussion.

General Commission Business

DHS representative Lucy Yohn joined the meeting to outline her role and function at DHS and to provide information to the TLC about programs administered by DHS. Several programs – Housing Voucher Program, Housing Grants, mental health assistance programs and other special services provided to tenants. Commissioner Clegg, suggested that having an organization or flow chart that described the programs and the terminology would be helpful education for leasing agents.

2019 Work Plan – Staff provided a handout that identified broad areas within which specific activities could be identified. Chair Krause decided to postpone discussion of the work plan until the next Commission meeting. She indicated that areas for discussion would also include the general format of the Commission meetings, such as how to handle public comment, reporting and other procedures.

Chair Report – Chair, Krause mentioned that Evictions will continue to be an important topic for the Commission. A new Commissioner, Christopher Bruno was introduced to the Commission.

Affiliate Report - Saul Reyes from Bu- Gata, reported that the meeting with AHC concerning tenants’ complaints at various properties was a good meeting and follow up meetings will be held. He is also seeking other opportunities at different properties to inform tenants of the services that they provide.

Staff Report – Rolda Nedd reported on her attendance at a meeting on the Campaign to Reduce Evictions hosted by Housing Virginia, and provided a handout of draft recommendations of the Legal Workgroup. The Governor’s Housing Conference was taking place in Crystal City November 14- 16 where staff would be attending.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m. Commission members will receive notice about the December meeting.