



FAIR RENT COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING

March 18, 2025 – 6:30 PM – Ludlow Room, Windsor Town Hall

PRESENT IN PERSON: *Charles Jackson, Tylon Chaney, Rachel Cusanno, Sandra Reault, Alysse Reynolds, Michael Bivans, Hope Ploszaj*

ABSENT: *Dawn Zukowski, Ikesha Guy,*

STAFF PRESENT: *Patrick McMahon, Rachal Conley*

GUESTS: *Sarah White – Connecticut Fair Housing Center and Rafael Podolsky – Connecticut Legal Services*

1. CALL TO ORDER

Jackson called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

3. FAIR RENT COMMISSION PRIMER

Sarah White of Connecticut Fair Housing Center and Rafie Podolsky of Connecticut Legal Services, both involved in the creation of the Fair Rent Commission statutes, presented slides to the committee regarding the role, responsibilities, and processes if a Fair Rent Commission (FRC). The commission members introduced themselves and engaged in a Q&A style presentation.

White and Podolsky explained that a FRC is the only way tenants are able to challenge rent in Connecticut and the scope of the commission is related to rent and rental charges for current renters (including assisted living facilities, month-to-month tenants, and rented land ie. mobile home park) but not any renter shorter than 120 days. The commission is able to informally support enforcing housing code as fair rent relates to living conditions in accordance with legal requirements. Regarding fair rent, state law provides the commission 13 factors to consider if applicable, generally considering the situation in totality with no one factor outweighing another automatically.

Bivans questioned the actual enforcement powers of the commission, where White and Podolsky clarified that decisions about fair rent made by the commission through a hearing are legal orders. The committee can take a wide range of actions through a hearing including (but not necessarily limited to) decrease rent, accept rental increases, adopt phased in increases, temporarily decrease rent in relationship to repairs/other conditions met, and orders typically last for a year unless stated otherwise.

Within the presentation the commission had discussions regarding the role and resources available, standardizing practices, and planning future meetings. The commission requested a variety of materials including the slides presented at the meeting, documentation about Connecticut's laws for landlord and tenant responsibilities, information about fair rent commission and procedures from surrounding towns, which will be compiled by staff and distributed. The commission also discussed public awareness for the commission and its function, including possible marketing.

4. MOCK HEARING EXERCISE

With guidance from White and Podosky the commission conducted a mock hearing exercise with staff, Patrick McMahon and Rachal Conley, participating as tenant and landlord respectively. The materials provided to the commission included an example complaint form and example evidence including an email chain and lease agreement relating to the mock case. The case related to a situation of rental increase for a tenant on a fixed income in violation of an existing lease agreement.

Through the mock trial the commission members discussed the role of the health and housing department in identifying code violations, the process of the hearing, and possible ways to evaluate cases. Commission members felt the exercise was helpful and would be open to more exercises of this nature.

5. REPORT OF ACTIVITIES FROM STAFF LIAISON

McMahon mentioned a current Fair Rent Case going through the town mediation process. Currently the case is waiting on the Health Department assessment scheduled for the upcoming Thursday.

6. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

Jackson moved to postpone a review of the previous meeting minutes for February 19 2025 until next meeting which was seconded by Cusanno.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Jackson called to adjourn meeting at 9:04 p.m.