

Landlord-Tenant Relations Board
Wednesday, May 2, 2018 – 7:00 p.m.
Minutes of the Regular Meeting
301 King Street
Conference Room 2000
Alexandria, VA 22314

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michelle Frazier, Jeanette Shepherd, Elliott Waters, Katie Dilks, Monique Banks, and Valerie Ianieri

MEMBERS ABSENT: Eric Dillon, Wynn Hunsaker, and Kaitlyn Massa

STAFF PRESENT: Melodie Seau and Gwendolyn Lassiter

GUESTS PRESENT: Mrs. Helene Butler, and Mr. David Barakut

CALL TO ORDER:

Monique Banks called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m. and opened the meeting to the public for comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mrs. Helene Butler along with Mr. David Barakut presented pictures of overflowing garbage, an open drain, and other dirty and unkept areas of Lynbrook, the property where Mrs. Butler lives. Mrs. Butler said that she received notice of a \$58 rent increase and that she is being charged an annual amenity fee of \$200. Mrs. Butler said that she does not use the pool or the clubhouse. Melodie Seau offered to contact the property to see if they could waive that fee for Mrs. Butler.

Mrs. Butler noted several additional issues of concern to her. She said that there is a loose wire hanging over a drainage area that is a hazard. Mrs. Butler said that Code Administration has been out and has cited the property for the wire and the open drain.

Mrs. Butler said that some parking spaces for persons with disabilities located near rental office have been eliminated and there are now only two spaces. Often, when Mrs. Butler needs to go to the rental office, she is unable to find a space close to the office because the two spaces are usually occupied.

The buildings are now only cleaned once a week and Mrs. Butler said that this is insufficient to maintain the property in a decent condition. She said trash removal has also been reduced and that there are mice, rats, and raccoons constantly around the dumpsters. Mrs. Butler is concerned that the laundry rooms are not safe or secure, because the doors are bent and won't close. She said that the laundry rooms are not being cleaned and she showed the Board pictures of the laundry room floor.

Elliott Waters recommended that Mr. Barakut assist Mrs. Butler in preparing a list of issues that include the dates that the problems were reported to management. Ms. Seau said that she would contact management about the amenity fee, and she would consult with Code Administration to see what is being done about the other issues raised by Mrs. Butler. Ms. Seau said that Mrs. Butler could leave messages on her voice mail, and that Dr. Goodman would respond.

VOLUNTARY RENT GUIDELINES

Ms. Seau said that Reverend Waters had emailed her a list of questions. She said that because responding to all on emails related to Board business is a violation of FOIA, therefore, she would answer the questions at the meeting. In the email, Reverend Waters asked how Alexandria compares regionally, nationally and statewide in terms of rent increase guidelines. Ms. Seau said that no other jurisdiction in the region has rent increase guidelines. Rent increases in Alexandria are generally in line with other jurisdictions in the Washington DC metropolitan statistical area.

Reverend Waters noted some editing corrections in his email. In addition, he asked how much the annual apartment survey costs, how long the City has been conducting the survey and how the data are used. Ms. Seau said the only cost of the survey is staff time. She said that the City has been conducting the survey since 1979, and the printed and online survey is provided to persons seeking apartments. The data are used to calculate the number of market affordable properties in the City as well as the vacancy rate and percentage of increases in rent.

Reverend Waters had concerns about the language in the memo and felt that there should be more specific and concrete terms regarding how the guidelines are implemented and their impact. Ms. Seau explained that the Office of Housing had conducted a survey about three years ago and determined that about 80 percent of landlords surveyed were aware of the guidelines and considered them in determining rent increases. However, Ms. Seau said that the main function of the guidelines is to negotiate rent increase complaints for tenants. Not all cases mediated result in the landlord's full compliance with the guidelines, but staff is very often able to mediate a lower increase to the tenant.

After much discussion Katie Dilks suggested deleting the sentence from the staff report that says: "Staff estimates that most landlords in the City are in compliance with the guidelines." Reverend Waters agreed that deleting this sentence would address some of his concerns. Ms. Dilks moved to approve the guidelines with that sentence deleted. Valerie Ianieri seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION 830 WORK GROUP

Ms. Banks reported on the final meeting of the Resolution 830 Work Group. The work group determined that Resolution 830 should be amended. The work group determined that the replacement standard would be based on bedrooms, rather than the number of units.

Reverend Waters raised concerns with the use of the terms "Section 8," "Public Housing," and other terms that he said stigmatize residents who live in the communities. Ms. Banks and Ms. Seau explained that these were program names that identified particular types of funding and could not be separated from the discussion of Resolution 830, because all of the programs offered differing levels of subsidy. Ms. Seau said that the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit

program does not provide housing subsidies as deep as Public Housing, Section 8 Moderate Rehab, or Section 211. Ms. Banks said that it is necessary to identify program types in this discussion to be able to compare the level of affordability. She said it is not possible to evaluate or compare the units in the Resolution 830 inventory without identifying the program source and the level of affordability.

Reverend Waters said that scholars have written articles which encourage a more neutral discussion of housing programs. Ms. Seau asked that Reverend Waters share these articles with the Board for future discussion.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Dilks moved to approve the minutes of the April 4, 2018, meeting. Ms. Ianieri seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Michelle Frazier asked how staff and the Board could assist Mrs. Butler. Ms. Seau said she will follow-up with Code Administration to make sure the problems are being corrected, and she will also contact the property manager.

ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:48 p.m.