

HOUSING COMMIS.SION

OFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2023, 11:30 AM
100 W HOUSTON & VIDEO CONFERENCE

Members Present: Robert Abraham, Member
Pedro Alanis, Member
Kristin Davila, Member
Ed Hinojosa, Member
Kammy Horne, Member
Taneka Nikki Johnson, Member
Amanda Lee Keammerer, Member
Cecilia Garcia Redmond, Member

Members Absent: Shirley Gonzales, Chair

Staff Present: Veronica Gonzalez, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Juan Valdez, *Mayor's Office*; Teresa Myers, *Mayor's Office*; Jameene Williams, *City Attorney's Office*; Allison Beaver, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Jacob Floyd, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Siboney Diaz-Sánchez, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Marivel Arauza, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; James McKenzie, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Jessica Lozano, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Valentina Fernandez, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Sharon Chan, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*

- **Call to Order** - The meeting was called to order by Chair Pro-tem Kristin Davila at 11:52 AM.
- **Roll Call** – Allison Beaver, Senior Housing Policy Manager, called the roll. At the time when roll call was conducted, seven (7) members were present representing a quorum.
- **Public Comments** (*Video timestamp: 7:20*) – Davila announced there were four (4) residents signed up for public comment.
 1. Item #2 – Susan Richardson submitted a written comment.

It feels like the City is looking to merely align itself with State policy in avoidance of any sort of liability instead of trying to provide any real sense of security for its rental residents. Other municipalities seem to be more innovative in assisting their renters (ex. Houston's hotline, Miami-Dade's rental ordinance passed in 2022, and Minneapolis' rental escrow strategy). Has NHSD/ COSA dedicated any time or effort to investigate what other cities are doing to help renters feel more stable and eliminate fears of retaliation or will it just continue to expect local tenant organizations to step up and advocate when there are issues?
 2. Item #2 – Sylvia Flores, a renter and leader with TOP (Texas Organizing Project), stated she supported a strong Tenants' Bill of Rights. The previous conditions she experienced at Seven Oaks Apartments consisted of plumbing and air conditioning issues that went unaddressed. But, in June 2022, she learned of her tenant's rights.

Flores expressed anger that TOP's initial Tenants' Bill of Rights language was changed by City because there were important rights that needed to be included. She stated the right to organize without retaliation would assure tenants have a safe starting point to organize and fight for their rights. A standard for communicating in language the tenant would understand should be set so they are able to comprehend their rights. Finally, the Bill of Rights should be given during the lease signing. Flores also stated the City should assign an office for tenants to call when they need translation services and an individual in every leasing office to be available to provide tenants' rights information. She stated implementing these rights would give renters a place where they could thrive.

3. Item #2 – Keisha Brown, a renter and leader with TOP, supported a strong tenants' Bill of Rights. Brown stated that after being ignored by her property management for six months on issues with flooding, mold, and mildew, she called Fox's Problem Solvers. After the news story, she stated her lease was not renewed even though she was a tenant of seven years. The retaliation caused her to be homeless. She expressed that TOP was angry at the changes from the City to their original bill. Brown stated the right to organize without retaliation needed to be explicitly stated to assure tenants a safe starting point to fight for their rights. She requested the City designate an office to call for translation services so tenants could communicate in a language they would understand to comprehend their rights. Brown also demanded the City assign an individual in every leasing office to be available for tenants' rights information as the limitation of the Resolution did not allow the City to request leasing offices to provide the bill during lease signing.
4. Item #2 - Debra Watts, a renter and leader with TOP, stated she supported a strong Tenants' Bill of Rights. Watts noted she faced harassment with new property manager as they did not expect Section 8 tenants. Watts had to hire her own lawyer as Section 8 representatives were not able to reason with the new management on building issues such as no air conditioning, roof leaks and electrical repairs. She demanded three items placed in the Resolution: 1) tenant's ability to organize without retaliation 2) accommodation for communication in a language that a tenant can understand 3) demand the bill be posted in every leasing office. Watts stated these items would make San Antonio a place where renters could thrive.

Staff note: The Housing Commission deadline for submitted written comment is 24 hours before the meeting. The reason for this is because it takes 24 hours for comments received in a language other than English to be translated. Speakers can leave a voicemail to be played during the meeting up to three hours before the meeting. Speakers can sign up to speak live during the meeting virtually up to 3 hours before the meeting or to speak during the meeting in person up until the meeting starts. Speakers who call past the deadline are given the opportunity to submit a written comment to be included in the minutes but not read during the meeting, and to sign up in advance for the following meeting.

Commissioner Keammerer entered at 11:57 AM.

1. **Item #1: Approval of the minutes from the San Antonio Housing Commission meeting on March 22, 2023.** (Video timestamp: 19:14)
Commissioner Amanda Lee Keammerer motioned to approve the minutes from the San Antonio Housing Commission meeting on March 22, 2023. Commissioner Robert Abraham seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Item #2: Briefing and discussion on the City's Tenants Rights Campaign. (Video timestamp: 19:42)

Davila requested Jacob Floyd, Housing Policy Manager, present. Floyd presented regarding the Tenants' Rights Awareness Campaign's background, goals, stakeholder and session outreach summary, updates to proposed materials, continued engagement, and timeline. Jameene Williams, Assistant City Attorney, notated that the Resolution is drafted with the input of stakeholders and staff. She stated the City Attorney's Office (CAO) was tasked with locating the supporting laws referenced.

Commissioner Johnson asked if the City could require leasing offices to post ordinances or laws as the community members requested. Williams stated the CAO would need to research if there would be any issues from the state to require the posting.

Abraham thanked Floyd and staff for their efforts and requested hard copies of the materials once approved so that the Public Engagement and Outreach Subcommittee could help distribute them.

Keammerer inquired on Slide 15 regarding the increased eviction data in the IH-10/410 area. Floyd stated staff received the eviction data from the County but could not comment specifically why there were more evictions in the area other than potentially a large concentration of apartment complexes. Keammerer noted that more investigation into the reasoning could assist in increasing outreach for that area. Keammerer requested clarification on Slide 18 regarding the follow up process in reporting non-compliance, if the process will be posted somewhere for tenants' information, and how campaign effectiveness would be tracked. Floyd stated the "Rights, Responsibilities, & Resources" (RRR), the Resolution's companion document, informs a tenant how to file a non-compliance report as well as the contact number to fair housing counselors to assist them. He stated staff has baseline data of complaints logged through Council Offices and 311 Customer Service to track the campaign effectiveness but are developing additional methods for tracking. Keammerer inquired what other ways tenants could reach out. Veronica Gonzalez, Assistant Director, stated tenants could reach out to 311, TRLA (Texas RioGrande Legal Aid), and NHSD's fair housing counselors. Keammerer inquired how the Resolution, RRR, and Notice of Tenant' Rights compare to other cities practices. Gonzalez noted best practices from BASTA in Austin in developing more visual and user-friendly documents for tenants.

Commissioner Alanis requested clarification on where in the RRR the right to organize was stated. Gonzalez stated the right to organize without retaliation was in Section 2 of the Resolution and Page 2 of the RRR under "Can my rental housing provider retaliate against me?". Alanis inquired if there were options for translation services. Gonzalez stated the fair housing counselors, TRLA staff, and 311 would be able to assist currently. Long term, staff would propose a budget increase for additional staff to assist with questions. Alanis noted the San Antonio Housing Trust (SAHT) similarly passed a Tenants' Bill of Rights in 2021 that would be enforced by developments that received funding from SAHT. He inquired if there may be similar compromise offered to developments that receive City funds instead of a resolution or ordinance that must be enforced citywide. He highlighted potential state legislation talks of binding municipalities enforcement of property rights and requested staff be aware of the discussions. Davila also acknowledged the introduced bill (HB 2127) and asked how it would affect the protections in at the local level. Williams noted that the City would be able to assist through contractual protections on developments that receive City funding.

Davila inquired what the reasoning was to not include the word “organize” in Section 2 of the Resolution. Williams stated that CAO used the same verbiage that was included in state law. Davila stated during the Renters’ Solutions Subcommittee (RSS) meeting discussions, renters, property owners and managers stated the RRR would be beneficial for the tenant to receive before the lease signing. She inquired if there would be anything prohibiting the requirement to post the information in leasing offices. Gonzalez stated stakeholders noted that renters may not read the RRR when given with a large pile of other lease documents. She stated staff would lead an educational campaign for landlords and renters including partners such as TOP and TRLA to lead sessions, block walk, and find additional meaningful ways to educate the community. Davila inquired if staff had connected with utility providers to forward inquiries of plumbing or electrical maintenance issues that they may receive and could forward to staff. Gonzalez agreed and stated staff would follow up on the connection. Commissioner Redmond suggested the tenants’ rights information could be placed in the tenant’s first utility bill as another way to distribute the information.

Johnson inquired how often the email list would receive information. Gonzalez stated that the list of over 130,000 individuals, compiled since 2020, contained emails of residents that requested information due to eviction, right to counsel, and rental assistance. Johnson requested that though the RRR wasn’t a requirement in the resolution currently, that it be made a requirement eventually. She noted there was a form that was required to be turned in to the leasing office within 72 hours and the timeframe would be prime to ensure the RRR had a meaningful time and space to be reviewed by the tenant instead of during an eviction. Alanis agreed and stated that the SAHT Tenant’s Rights is incorporated in the management’s lease documents so they can be referred easily in court or maintenance issues. Redmond agreed that any opportunity to read the material would be beneficial.

Keammerer noted that a potential outreach partner for property owners may be banks when they take out financing for developments like ADUs (accessory dwelling units). Johnson inquired where do property owners obtain their documents to give to tenants. Alanis stated an attorney could assist in obtaining the documents.

3. Item #3: Director’s Report *(Video timestamp: 1:13:33)*

Davila requested Gonzalez present.

Gonzalez overviewed updates to the Property Tax Help Campaign (PTHC), Housing Assistance Program, Housing Base Launch, and upcoming events.

Abraham thanked staff and City partners in their tremendous efforts for the PTHC and Tenants’ Rights Campaign.

Johnson applauded staff’s high satisfactory ratings on the PTHC. She inquired when would promotional material be available for the reopening of the rental assistance portal. Gonzalez stated the materials would be available on Monday (May 1, 2023) at the latest.

Abraham praised, Siboney Diaz-Sanchez, Community Engagement Administrator, and Marivel Arauza, Public Relations Manager, for their assistance in providing correct and transparent information during an engagement opportunity with UTSA and the Westside.

Closing-

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned without contest at 1:13 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:

Sharon Chan

**Sharon Chan
Housing Policy Coordinator**

FINAL