



APPROVED

MEETING MINUTES

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS COMMISSION

Thursday, September 5, 2019, 7:00 P.M.
Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, Room 2402

Present: Chair Larry Donoghue, Ellen Cushing, Kathy Feingold, Noelle Gilbreath, Moika Long, Neda Nozari, Alderman Eleanor Revelle

Absent: Monika Bobo, Renee Phillips

Staff: Sarah Flax, Housing and Grants Manager, Quentin Crane, VISTA Housing Associate, Marion Johnson, Housing Intern

Call to order

Chair Donoghue called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM with a quorum present. He welcomed Neda Nozari, newly appointed commissioner, who provided commissioners a brief summary of her work relating to fair housing and employment.

Approval of minutes for August 1, 2019 meeting

Ellen Cushing moved approval, Neda Nozari seconded the motion; it was approved 7-0.

Public comment

None

Metropolitan Tenants Organization Application for Landlord-Tenant Services Funding Renewal

Chair Donoghue gave a brief overview of renewal funding request and invited John Bartlett, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Tenants Organization (MTO), to talk about their program and results to date. Mr. Bartlett reviewed the map that showed number of cases from each ward and noted that the volume of cases handled was up substantially in June and July. The largest category of calls were related to maintenance, with the main issues being windows that don't work, are cracked, etc., and flooding, which may be related to climate change. This issue is also seen in their Chicago calls. Cases relating to leases are also frequent and include landlords entering units without providing required notice. There were also calls about high late fees of \$100 and also late fees being charged per day. Questions relating to early lease terminations were also relatively frequent; reasons included tenant needing to relocate for a job or home purchase, and tenants wanting to move due to poor building maintenance. Eviction cases for tenants significantly behind on rent, unwillingness of landlords to cooperate with agencies working to prevent displacement, landlords withholding quite large amounts of security deposits for normal wear and tear on a unit, and noise complaints were also seen on some occasions. Often individual tenants call about multiple issues and call back multiple times.

MTO has done some negotiation but has not done full mediation cases. Mr. Bartlett noted that he is a trained mediator and this is an area of focus, as it can address

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displacement by helping each party understand the other and enable them to work out a resolution. In response Ms. Nozari's question if MTO's partner, the Lawyers Committee for Better Housing (LCBH), represents tenants in court, Mr. Bartlett explained that LCBH will be expand their work in this area. Tenant organizing was also discussed; there had been some work to organize a building with a broken elevator that had a number of senior tenants.

Mr. Bartlett responded to a commissioner's question about how many cases were Northwestern University students, estimating about 20% of total. It was agreed that this should be tracked. In addition, staff will connect MTO with Northwestern University's off campus housing staff to help address student needs. Mr. Bartlett answered additional questions from commissioners relating to call/case levels.

It was agreed that the HHC would further evaluate issues including high late payment fees and potentially recommend changes to the City's Landlord-Tenant ordinance.

There being no further questions or discussion, Alderman Revelle moved approval of the renewal funding request and recommend its approval to Planning & Development Committee/City Council, Ms. Nozari seconded the motion and it was approved 7-0.

Evanston Development Cooperative Accessory Dwelling Unit Pilot Proposal

Chair Donoghue provided a brief overview of the pilot loan project proposed by Evanston Development Cooperative (EDC). Alderman Revelle and Ellen Cushing noted they would not take part in the discussion and would recuse themselves from the vote as they are both EDC shareholders.

Dick Co noted that Evanston can become a leader in using ADUs as affordable housing, and that residents who learned about EDC from meetings and stories in the media had contacted EDC about how they could participate and help address Evanston's housing needs. The owners of 1188 Sherman Avenue want to build a 2-bedroom coach house on their property that would be income restricted to a household at 80% of the median income for 20 years. The City would provide a loan at 1% interest payable over 20 years, and record a lien to secure the affordability requirement. This would be a pilot to help explore other potential sources of financing. It would also be a first project for EDC with groundbreaking in 2019 and an estimated four-month construction period that would enable people to see both the ADU and the innovative construction materials and building methods. EDC would use its Evanston CDBG grant to hire workers for the construction, as well as a grant they are receiving from Cook County to get started. Mr. Co provided a detailed explanation of the pro forma, the financial disincentives for early repayment/opt out, and the financial return for the homeowner and the City.

Ms. Feingold agreed that having a product out there is important and noted that the homeowner is investing some personal funds. Ms. Nozari asked if the owner were to sell, could the buyer assume the loan and the affordability commitment. Staff responded that would be possible. Ms. Feingold reiterated that parking requirements for ADUs were a substantial barrier to getting more developed; Mr. Co explained this ADU would

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be above a 2-car garage and another parking space would be provided. Resources for new ADU landlords, including getting income qualified households from the City's centralized waitlist managed by CPAH, the Property Standards division RENT program and MTO, were discussed.

Staff explained that some changes to current zoning would be brought to City Council for consideration, including waiving parking requirements, at least for affordable units, in the near future. Mr. Co talked about work to develop a pilot ADU project that would enable a lower income homeowner to avoid displacement and age in place is also in the works. Financing for that model could potentially come from the City's Community Development Block Grant. Development of a comprehensive ADU code would likely be a part of the Affordable Housing Plan.

There being no further questions or discussion, Ms. Feingold moved approval of the request for loan of up to \$220,000 to finance the construction of an ADU/coach house at 1188 Sherman Avenue with the terms and conditions in the application and to recommend approval to City Council; Ms. Long seconded the motion, and it was approved 5-0 with two abstentions.

Staff Reports

None

New/Other Business

Staff provided a brief update on the work of the Affordable housing Plan Steering Committee.

Adjournment

Ms. Cushing moved to adjourn at 8:17 PM, Ms. Feingold seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

The next scheduled meeting of the Commission is Thursday, October 3, at 7:00 PM. in room 2402.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah K. Flax, Housing and Grants Manager