



AGENDA AND NOTICE OF A MEETING
Housing & Community Development Committee
Tuesday, February 15, 2022
Virtual on Zoom 7:00 PM

Pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/7(2), SSC members and City staff will be participating in this meeting remotely. It has been determined that in-person meetings of the City's Boards, Commissions, and Committees are not practical or prudent due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Accordingly, the Housing & Community Committee may be convened, and members may attend by means other than physical presence consistent with 5 ILCS 120/7.

Those wishing to make public comments may submit written comments or sign-up with the [public comment form](#), by 5 pm the day of the meeting, to provide public comments by phone or video during the meeting, or by calling/texting 847-448-4311.

Public comment form: <https://forms.gle/3xH94W64m4V4fDC49>

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83028735282?pwd=YkdITTU1ZnY2TmxZZkJVOTIEa0FSUT09>

Passcode: 467209

Or join by phone:

Dial: +1 312 626 6799

Webinar ID: 830 2873 5282

Passcode: 467209

Page

1. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

2. SUSPENSION OF THE RULES

Members participating electronically or by telephone

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

- A. [Housing & Community Development Committee - Jan 18 2022 - Minutes - Pdf](#) 3 - 5

4. NEW BUSINESS/OLD BUSINESS

- A. **For Discussion** 6 - 9
[Investigating the opinions and experiences of landlords and tenants referred to landlord-tenant services - Attachment - Pdf](#)
- B. **For Discussion**
Small Landlord Task Force implementation discussion
- C. **For Discussion**
Overview of the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) summary report on an Affordable, Resilient Housing Retrofit Program

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

6. ADJOURNMENT

Agenda items and order are subject to change.

Questions can be sent to Sarah Flax, Housing & Grants Manager at sflax@cityofevanston.org.

The City of Evanston is committed to making all public meetings accessible to persons with disabilities. Any citizen needing mobility or communications access assistance should contact 847-448-4311 or 847-448-8064 (TTY) at least 48 hours in advance of the scheduled meeting so that accommodations can be made. La ciudad de Evanston está obligada a hacer accesibles todas las reuniones públicas a las personas minusválidas o las quines no hablan inglés. Si usted necesita ayuda, favor de ponerse en contacto con la Oficina de Administración del Centro a 847/866-2916 (voz) o 847/448-8052 (TDD).



Housing & Community Development Committee

Tuesday, January 18, 2022 @ 7:00 PM

Virtual on Zoom

**COMMITTEE MEMBER
PRESENT:**

Monika Bobo, Kathy Feingold, Hugo Rodriguez, Loren Berlin, Joanne Zolomij, Councilmember Bobby Burns, Councilmember Jonathan Nieuwsma, , and Chair Eleanor Revelle

**COMMITTEE MEMBER
ABSENT:**

Councilmember Devon Reid

STAFF PRESENT:

Sarah Flax, Housing & Grants Manager; Marion Johnson, Housing & Economic Development Analyst; Ana Elizarraga, Housing & Economic Development Analyst

GUESTS PRESENT:

Amy Kaufman, John Barlett, and Mark Swartz

1. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

Chair Revelle called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM with a quorum present.

2. SUSPENSION OF THE RULES

A. Suspension of The Rules

Motion to suspend the rules to allow for members to participate electronically or by phone.

Moved by Loren Berlin

Seconded by Councilmember Jonathan Nieuwsma

Ayes: Monika Bobo, Hugo Rodriguez, Loren Berlin, Joanne Zolomij, Councilmember Bobby Burns, Councilmember Jonathan Nieuwsma, and Councilmember Eleanor Revelle

Carried 7-0 on a recorded vote

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the the December 14, 2021 meeting minutes.

Moved by Councilmember Jonathan Nieuwsma
Seconded by Hugo Rodriguez

Ayes: Hugo Rodriguez, Councilmember Jonathan Nieuwsma, Kathy Feingold,
Loren Berlin, Joanne Zolomij, Councilmember Bobby Burns, and
Councilmember Eleanor Revelle

Abstained Monika Bobo
:

Carried 7-0 on a recorded vote

4. NEW BUSINESS/OLD BUSINESS

- A. Approval of Renewal Contract for Landlord-Tenant Services with Metropolitan Tenants Organization and Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing for January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022

Staff summarized the contract for Landlord-Tenant Services with Metropolitan Tenants Organization and Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing and presented the Tenant Services Report. Discussion was had on tenant service specifics. Hugo Rodriguez expressed his approval of MTO/LCBH efforts and stated he would like to help in any way he can. Councilmember Burns inquired about the types of maintenance calls and response time. John Barlett, Executive Director of Metropolitan Tenants Organization was available to respond to inquiries.

Motion to approve the recommendation to the City Council for the funding of the renewal contract for Landlord-Tenant Services with Metropolitan Tenants Organization and Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing

Moved by Joanne Zolomij
Seconded by Hugo Rodriguez

Ayes: Hugo Rodriguez, Joanne Zolomij, Monika Bobo, Kathy Feingold, Loren Berlin, Councilmember Bobby Burns, Councilmember Jonathan Nieuwsma, and Councilmember Eleanor Revelle

Carried 8-0 on a recorded vote

- B. Approval of Renewal Funding to Administer the Inclusionary Housing Waitlist

Staff summarized the request for funding to administer the Inclusionary Housing Waitlist by Community Partners for Affordable Housing. Discussion was had on inclusionary housing and waitlist management specifics. Amy Kaufman, Director of Development and Community Relations for CPAH was available to respond to committee inquiries.

Motion to approve the recommendation to the City Council for the funding of the renewal contract for Community Partners for Affordable Housing to Administer the Inclusionary Housing Waitlist

Moved by Kathy Feingold

Seconded by Joanne Zolomij

Ayes: Kathy Feingold, Joanne Zolomij, Monika Bobo, Hugo Rodriguez,
Councilmember Bobby Burns, Councilmember Jonathan Nieuwsma, and
Councilmember Eleanor Revelle

Carried 7-0 on a recorded vote

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

A. Tina Peydon

Tina Peydon cited recent sales of apartment buildings and noticed affordable units for 30% AMI, the Section 8 voucher. She stated she thanks Sarah Flax for including help for small landlords in the ARPA fund proposal. She illustrated how landlords have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Eviction Moratorium. She suggested councilmembers on the call vote Yes to small landlord aid in future proposals.

B. Sue Loellbach - Joining Forces for Affordable Housing

Sue Loellbach stated Connections gets calls from about 100 people a week and at least half of those only have one (1) or two (2) people in the household. She stated there is a need for housing of all sizes.

C. Sarah Flax Upcoming Items

Sarah Flax stated items coming up are the small Landlord working group, the one-stop shop retrofit program (as part of the Partners for Places project), and production of the CAPER report.

D. Councilmember Burns

Councilmember Burns stated he wants to know he, the committee and City Council take Tina Peydon's concern seriously to aid small landlords. He stated he understands her advocacy efforts.

6. ADJOURNMENT

A. Motion to Adjourn at 9:07 p.m.

Motion to adjourn meeting to February 15, 2022

Moved by Kathy Feingold

Seconded by Councilmember Jonathan Nieuwsma

Ayes: Monika Bobo, Kathy Feingold, Hugo Rodriguez, Joanne Zolomij,
Councilmember Bobby Burns, Councilmember Jonathan Nieuwsma, and
Councilmember Eleanor Revelle

Carried 7-0 on a recorded vote



Memorandum

To: Members of Housing & Community Development Committee
From: Sarah Flax, Housing & Grants Administrator
CC: Marion Johnson, Housing & Economic Development Analyst; Ana Elizarraga, Housing & Economic Development Analyst
Subject: Investigating the opinions and experiences of landlords and tenants referred to landlord-tenant services

Date: February 15, 2022

Recommended Action:

This memo provides information in response to the referral to the Housing and Community Development Committee to conduct an annual survey investigating the opinions and experiences of landlords and tenants referred to the City's landlord-tenant mediation and housing counselor. The scope of information in the referral is to determine how can we ensure 311 collects basic information from the landlord and tenants before they're referred to an outside agency. Staff requests discussion by and guidance from the committee on the next steps.

Committee Action:

For Discussion

Summary:

A referral was made by the City Council to conduct an annual survey investigating the opinions and experiences of landlords and tenants referred to Metropolitan Tenants organization/Lawyers Committee for Better Housing for landlord-tenant services. Staff seeks direction from the Housing and Community Development Committee to further define and clarify the intended goal of the survey. Staff has started reviewing the necessary steps and components of the survey process as well as identifying challenges that will need to be addressed and considered for this effort, highlighted below. Once the intended goal for the survey is further defined by the Committee, Staff recommends investigating the implementation of an initial pilot survey including a single closed question (yes/no) for participants contacting the service provider through 311, with an opportunity for unsatisfied responders to share additional feedback after the survey question. This small-scale exercise

should provide additional helpful information before implementing any larger-scale pilot program.

Data Availability and Tracking

Currently, residents can contact MTO services either by calling them directly or by reaching out to 311. In 2021, less than 30% of the requests were made through 311, most residents contact MTO directly via the Helpline. For requests coming through 311, Staff confirmed with the 311 manager that most calls result in a service request being created that sends an email to MTO for follow-up. This process requires entering addresses and contact details such as a phone number and/or an email address.

Staff discussed whether the contact information for Evanston residents who contact MTO directly can be shared for purposes of including the majority of total residents seeking assistance in a survey. It needs to be determined if MTO is able to share this information without first seeking approval from each caller. This would create an extra step, a first contact to seek that approval before the City could conduct a survey, and also raises a concern of a risk of people being driven away from using the service in the future if they do not want their information shared with other parties.

In addition to seeking information on whether 311 could collect contact information of residents and landlords seeking landlord-tenant services, Housing and Grants and 311 staff discussed details of conducting a survey that would achieve the goal of determining if Evanston callers were receiving services from MTO/LCBH in a timely manner and if their needs were addressed that are shown below.

- **Expected response rate to a survey:** Based on 40 monthly calls and a response rate of 10% (at the lower end of surveys average of 5-30%), we could expect about 40-50 responses per year.

Technology and process

- **Different platforms:** While 311 and MTO use a tracking process to keep track of all requests, they do not use the same system. MTO does get service requests notifications but performs their work using their own tool to track information and progress. It is unlikely that both systems will be able to integrate easily. MTO is also servicing many other communities and is unlikely to change its process solely for the City of Evanston. Requiring MTO to update 311 tickets to use the performance report may double their tracking work.
- **Survey timing:** If completing a survey on MTO's ability to reach out and handle requests, an automated survey message sent within a short amount of time after the request was initially created is likely the best way to obtain accurate information.

- **Frequency of report:** Based on the volume of requests (30-40 a month), the average survey response rate of 5-30%, and resources currently available, an annual analysis is likely the best frequency for review of the data to ensure enough data is available. "Time to respond" data could be reviewed more frequently to address potential slowdowns.
- **Survey technology:** A very short and simple automated survey sent via text is likely the best option to reach the most respondents and garner responses. Lengthy surveys involving long questions typically see much lower response rates and high abandon rates. Staff will need to investigate whether the City has access to such technology already and whether it could be used for this purpose, along with any legal requirements involved with reaching out directly to residents via phone for non-emergency purposes.
- **Survey opt-out:** An opting-out method will be required along with a method to manage it, especially for repeat users.
- **Feedback follow-up:** Implementing a survey will require a way to review and assess comments, and provide follow-up, whether on the service surveyed or unrelated issues brought up in the responses. Identifying resources, a process, timeline, and acceptable resolution is key to ensure that surveying the experience of residents does not result in creating additional frustrations or unanswered feedback/grievances.

Survey content and Data Points:

- **Clarity of purpose:** The referral states a goal to investigate the opinion and experience of the landlord and tenants using services. If the goal is to provide an acceptable turnaround time on providing services, tracking first contact data could be a useful metric. If the goal is to track satisfaction level, then further discussion is warranted to define what is considered satisfactory. In some cases, while a satisfactory solution may be provided (template letter, communication plan, legal aid, mediation with landlord), it does not necessarily result in "satisfaction" from one or both of the parties involved (a legal eviction may still proceed, a tenant may be allowed to stay with unpaid rent due to eviction moratorium, a neighbor may be legally allowed to create the "nuisance" reported, etc..).
- **Time to respond definition:** It is likely many first contacts are voicemail or unanswered calls. This could be perceived by a user as a failure to reach them but is out of the control of a service provider. Depending on the information tracked by the service provider, the survey responses could be checked against the service's provider data but this likely would require considerable manual review of the data and dedicated resources.
- **Unrelated feedback and bias:** When a large organization surveys a group for a very specific matter or service, the feedback provided will likely include and be impacted by other factors that may not be apparent in the numbers. For example, a poor experience during an unrelated interaction may impact a survey response if it is the only survey provided or the easiest means of providing feedback. Written comments may provide some context but require extensive manual review.

- **Confusion around the provider:** A certain percentage of users are likely to be unclear as to what and who is being surveyed, depending on how they contacted the service provider. They may assume the survey to be about 311, the City's service, or something else. Survey questions may need to be different depending on the mode of contact to clarify.
- **Negative bias:** Consider potential negative bias in the survey data and in the response. The responses will not encompass all participants and are likely to be provided by a higher percentage of unsatisfied participants, like in any other survey.
- **Induced behavior:** Many service requests are likely to last several weeks during which MTO and the residents are working together towards a resolution. Tracking time to resolution could be an option (with changes to the existing process) but could result in a data point that does not really provide clear, actionable information. If this is considered a Key Performance Indicator, it could result in encouraging the closing of tickets as quickly as possible when a better satisfactory resolution would require additional time. Induced behavior should be considered when defining the goals and questions of a survey.
- **Identify needs:** More information may be available within the service providers tool to identify trends in existing needs or challenges (such as specific maintenance items) than a survey could provide, however, an open comment box may provide some additional context on resolution or repeated issues. This would require a detailed manual review of surveys and depend on the intended goal of the survey, follow-up plan, and resources available.

Scope

- **Small scale pilot:** Given the potential for unknowns and the items to be addressed for a successful implementation for one service (Tenant/Landlord Service), Staff recommends the implementation of a pilot survey program, applicable to a single service, at a small scale, to be reviewed and optimized before considering any broader implementation.

Legislative History:

A referral was made by the City Council for the Housing & Community Development Committee to conduct an annual survey investigating the opinions and experiences of landlords and tenants referred to our Landlord-tenant mediation and housing counselor.