

Housing & Tenants Rights Committee – Draft Minutes 5/8/18

Meeting called to order at 6:32pm

Attending:

Chris Henschen, Jerome Courshon, Mark McCracken, Carlos Jennings, Ninotchka Regets, Carol Cetrone, Jane Demian, Cara King, Sar Shahar, D. Barstow, Veronica Zarate (arrived late), Sylvie Shain (arrived late).

Ninotchka Regets nominated for Co-Chair, seconded, accepted, then gave a statement. Carol Cetrone nominated for Co-Chair, seconded, accepted, then gave a statement. Both were then unanimously elected.

Discussion of TIC moved to end of meeting.

Discussion of Citywide task force to address problems with Housing Department (HCID):

Carol Cetrone explained how there is a disconnect between tenants and HCID which needs to be addressed. Her idea is to form a Citywide task force to meet with individual Council Districts, appear at City Council and the City Housing Committee. She spoke about meeting a woman at City Hall who has similar ideas after her 90 year old mother was evicted from a retirement village. This woman was to get back to Carol with a list of "disconnects"; places where HCID is failing to represent LA tenants. On this list is a discussion about Tenant Habitability Plans (THPs) and how there is no input from the tenant, only the owner and HCID. Another complaint is the lengthy response time for HCID to call back and provide a case worker. McCracken stated that when he finally got a case worker on the phone, she was reading from the pamphlet he already had. We added a few other areas of concern: funding, training, clear policy, hierarchy and more money for relocation assistance. Barstow spoke about two new motions (Just Cause Eviction and No Harassment Ordinances) that have been stalled, waiting for a report from the City Housing Committee. She has had some help from Anna Ortega at HCID.

Discussion of Ellis Reform and overturning Costa Hawkins:

Carol explained how the Ellis Act began as a genuine path for mom and pop landlords to exit the rental business, but how it is now being exploited by speculative developers to evict their tenants. The Ellis Act is a CA state law and needs to be reformed to protect tenants. Costa Hawkins was passed in order to eliminate rent control in newer buildings. This is another CA State law that people are working to overturn. The State legislature has failed to do this so it will now be on the ballot this November. Carlos mentioned that since the downzoning of properties in the 1970s, denser buildings cannot be rebuilt. This has created a very high demand for older apartment buildings. He also brought up the topic of Airbnb and issues of operating a hotel business in a residential zone.

Discussion of TICs with Sylvie Shain of the LA Tenants Union (LATU):

TICs are a new product devised by a lawyer in SF to bypass the laws which govern Condo Conversions of older apartment buildings. Tenants are evicted, then apartments are listed for sale separately. This is a new trend being pushed by certain investors and real estate professionals to maximize profits. It is not a good situation as many times these units are not upgraded, so new owners are be tied to their property-mates with regard to plumbing, roofing, etc. These units retain their RSO status, but prospective new owners are not being told this. This means that if they live in the unit for a couple years and then decide to rent it out, under Ellis, the old tenant may have the right to move back in at the original rent. This practice is becoming more popular among certain investors, even though at this time there is only one CA lender who will fund TIC buyers.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00pm.