

LANDLORD-TENANT RELATIONS BOARD
Wednesday, March 2, 2022 – 7:00 P.M.
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
ZOOM CALL

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Bonnie Naugle at 7:03PM.

A. BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Elliott Waters, Razvan Cernucan, Geri Baldwin, Bonnie Naugle, Elijah St. Dennis, Katherine O’Connell, DeShauntra Martin

B. BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None

C. GUESTS PRESENT: Anna Dvorchik, Co-Chair, Friends of Mental Health

D. STAFF PRESENT: Melodie Seau, Gwendolyn Lassiter, Kim Cadena (Zoom Technical Support), Samuel Gates (Zoom Technical Support), Alison Coleman, DCHS, Bill Rooney, DCHS

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA: Elliott Waters moved to approve the agenda as presented. Elijah St. Dennis seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY MEETING: Elliott Waters moved to approve the minutes after amending to note that Jessica Giroux was not present for the last meeting. The motion was seconded by Elijah St. Dennis and passed unanimously.

4. ANNUAL APARTMENT MANAGERS’ SEMINAR: Melodie Seau said that the City annually offers an apartment managers’ seminar co-sponsored by the Office of Housing and the Landlord Tenant Relations Board. Friends of Mental Health has contracted for a curriculum that would be something like Mental Health First Aid Training specifically for landlords and property managers. Ms. Seau said that the City offers Mental Health First Aid Training for the public, and she recommended that anyone who has not taken the training do so, as it is free and offers excellent and helpful information on interacting with people with mental illness. Ms. Seau introduced Anna Dvorchik, Co-Chair of Friends of Mental Health, to discuss the training in development.

Bill Rooney clarified that Mental Health First Aid is an 8-hour training for the general public that can be accessed through the City website. Mr. Rooney said the training is offered regularly and is something like CPR for mental health. The training teaches people how to respond in a mental health crisis.

Ms. Dvorchik said that she is an attorney and has assisted tenants pro bono to keep them from losing housing or subsidies in situations involving mental health issues with tenants. Ms. Dvorchik said that there were people prior to the pandemic who were able to control symptoms of mental illness, but that they are not as well controlled now, and there is a need

for mental health training for people who work in landlord-tenant situations. Ms. Dvorchik said Friends of Mental Health recognized this need and set aside funding to develop the training working with Legal Services of Northern Virginia and other service providers.

The training would include explanation of fair housing and landlord tenant laws as well as training in de-escalation techniques and practices and sharing of available resources. The training would be in two parts and would include resources and tools to bring down tensions and allow landlords to be more sensitive to the needs of consumers of mental health services.

The training will be provided by zoom, with a second half with breakout sessions. Elliott Waters asked about the nature of the relationship between the City and Friends of Mental Health. In response to a question from Mr. Waters, Ms. Dvorchik said that Friends of Mental Health is a 501(c)3 organization incorporated in 1983 to work with the City's Community Services Board to assist with services that aren't available through the City. Examples are financial needs or paying for cleaning services for people who have been hoarding. In response to a question from Ms. Naugle, the training is tailored to the individuals as a work session and is difficult to be shared as a recorded resource.

After discussion and questions from members of the LTRB, Chairperson Naugle thanked the presenters.

5. STAFF UPDATE OF LANDLORD TENANT LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS:

Ms. Seau discussed bills that have progressed in the Virginia General Assembly as well as those that have died or been held over to 2023.

https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2022-02/LTRBoard_March2022LegislativeReport.pdf

6. CHAIR AND BOARD MEMBER REPORTS:

Vice Chair Waters called the Board's attention to three items from his report to the Board and said that he had a fourth item to add. He said that the first item is some thinking in the public square and some discussion is taking place in municipalities to address the housing crisis/shortage of housing.

Mr. Waters shared his testimony on Parkview that he provided at the City Council Public Hearing on the DSUP. Mr. Waters said that his testimony advocated for establishing a tenant advisory council.

Vice Chair Waters advised the Board that he had provided publications from legislators in his report. He encouraged Board members to sign up for legislative reports.

The fourth item sent recently was regarding a presentation from Dr. Moon regarding the City's actions. He proposed the following motion for consideration, but not for a current vote:

In accordance with the processing plan (info sharing in Mar/discussion in Apr followed by vote in Apr), I _____move that the LTRB go on record as requesting Planning and Zoning staff in collaboration with the Office of Housing staff verify the content in the article penned by Dr. Krystyn Moon entitled, “The African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, Virginia, 1930s–1960s” and if verified that a formal report of recommended corrective action be made and submitted through appropriate channels to include the Human Rights Commission, City Attorney and City Council within a reasonable timeframe and that a courtesy copy be provided to the LTRB, if authorized.

https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2022-02/LTRBoard_March2022ViceChairReport.pdf

Chairperson Naugle said that she and Katie O’Connell were reviewing the by-laws. She asked that others with suggestions for the by-laws convey that information to her. Chairperson Naugle said that she hoped to have something to the Board next month.

7. STAFF REPORT: The Alexandria Housing Development has purchased Park Vue, a 196-unit building on the corner of Mt. Vernon Avenue and Four Mile Road.

8. OTHER BUSINESS: Katherine O’Connell said she had applied for the Human Rights Commission but has not heard back yet.

Chairperson Naugle said that she forgot to read the COVID-19 information at the beginning of the meeting.

Chairperson Naugle made the following required announcement:

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic emergency, the March 2, 2022, meeting of the Landlord Tenant Relations Board is being held electronically pursuant to Virginia Code Section 2.2-3708.2(A)(3), the Continuity of Government ordinance adopted by the City Council on June 20, 2020 or Section 4-0.01(g) in HB29 and HB30, enacted by the 2020 Virginia General Assembly (Virginia Acts of Assembly Ch. 1283 and 1289), to undertake essential business. All of the members of the respective public bodies and staff are participating from remote locations through Zoom Webinar. These meetings are being held electronically, unless a determination is made that it is safe enough for the meetings to be held in person in Conference Room 2000, at 301 King Street, Alexandria, VA. Electronic access will be provided in either event. The meetings can be accessed by the public through: Zoom hyperlink, broadcasted live on the government channel 70, and streaming on the City’s website.

Vice Chair Waters asked for a map of committed affordable housing in the City. He also asked staff about tenant workshops in the City.

8. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:26PM.