

Arlington County Tenant-Landlord Commission Meeting (Virtual)

Meeting Notes 7.14.21

Commissioners present: David Timm (Chair), Kirit Mookerjee, Kristin Clegg, Nicole Merlene, Emily Camardo, Matthew Whitfield, Esq. Christopher Wimbush, Bismah Ahmed.

Virtual meeting held through electronic communication. A recording of the meeting is available on the County's webpage.

Approval of meeting notes – June meeting notes were approved without comment.

Public comment: June O'Connell expressed concern about Dittmar's proposal to convert apartment units to use as hotel/short term rentals. Concern that approval will set a precedent, and that this affects housing affordability if it becomes widespread county policy. She encouraged the TLC to email the Board to defer approval until fully discussed. Richard Tucker, Housing staff informed the meeting that this proposal was viewed as different since these properties have had units assigned and used exclusively as corporate leasing units. Planning staff will be including this as a work plan item next year, in the interim no new similar proposals would be considered. Chair Timm asked to follow up with staff.

Item #2 Park Shirlington (Information item) - presentation by Melissa Danowski (housing staff) available online. Proposal by Standard Communities/Foundation Housing AHIF loan bridge financing to renovate units to maintain them as affordable units. Company representatives provided feedback to questions from Commissioners.

Item #1 Merion Pike West Relocation Plan presented by William Bensten. Mr. Beinstern provided responses to the questions that Commissioners and Bu-gata had posed when the plan was presented in June month. Specific among these was the update to compensation based on unit size. Commissioner Mookerjee pointed out that the correction to rental rates must be included in the document since this becomes part of the public record for approval of the plan. A motion was taken to approve the relocation Plan. The vote was unanimous – 9-0.

Item #3 Site Plan Process – Richard Tucker, Principal Planner Housing Division. Richard provided a comprehensive presentation of Land Use Planning and the site plan process with reference to affordable housing and the relocation plan process. He fielded several questions from Commissioner Merlene, about the provision of affordable units as proposed by the AHMP and the relationship between planning and realizing housing goals. Incentive Zoning as used in Arlington, how this varies from other jurisdictions.

Item # 4 Proposed Tenant Supports – Commissioner Merlene provided information about her research into how other jurisdictions support tenants through mediation services. Virginia Laws offer protection to tenants, however this often requires a lawyer, which is often daunting for tenants. In other jurisdictions where this is available, there is significant success with out of

court settlements between landlords and tenants. Her research will continue, and she will update the Commission.

Item #5 Serrano Joint Sub-committee update – Chair Timm informed members that the proposed joint TLC-HC subcommittee to address aging buildings was in formation and more information would be available in the coming week. The committee Chair is Michael Hemminger, a Housing Commission member. TLC members are Commissioners Mookerjee and Merlene. Initial conversations include expanding the scope of the committee to include aging buildings throughout the County and how to reduce the length of the repair/maintenance process.

Chair Timm mentioned the return to in-person meetings in September and advocacy efforts to address in person quorum requirements. An additional item was presented concerning the Eviction Prevention subcommittee. Commissioner Whitefield introduced a Landlord Pledge to address the need for landlords to continue to assist renters to apply for rental assistance before filing an eviction notice. He also announced DHS's efforts at hosting Eviction Prevention information fairs to provide information on resources and help with rent relief applications.

Staff announcements – Staff announced community conversations hosted by MCOG and Challenging Racism on Housing Equity and Race, comments that would feed into the Fair Housing Plan. Staff updated the Commission on Amazon's announcement to donate undeveloped land parcels on the Crystal House apartment site to the County for affordable Housing development.

No Commission meeting in August, will resume in September.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

