

Meeting Minutes of the Virtual/Hybrid
Arlington County Tenant- Landlord Commission Meeting
February 8, 2023

Members present: Chris Wimbush, Kristin Clegg, Emily Camardo, Matt Royer, Kirit Mookerjee, Ryan Whitaker, Aaron Almanza,

Present virtually: Elder Julio Basurto, David Timm (Chair)

Staff: Rolda Nedd, Hector Mercado

Public Comment: Janeth Valenzuela, Bryan Coleman

Ms. Valenzuela commented on conditions at the Serrano such as phone outage in addition to the hardships experienced by persons when the elevator is down. She also highlighted the previous issue of residents fear of retaliation by management. She appealed to the Commission to pay attention to these issues.

Bryan Coleman submitted written comments on behalf of the NAACP. His testimony on conditions at the Serrano and other AHC properties was read by Vice Chair Wimbush.

Summary of Commission members responses:

Commission Timm (Chair) updated the Commission on discussions he had with staff and HC Commission Chair on the Serrano and the advice given to advocates and residents to report life threatening situations to the property management company and County agencies. He informed the Commission that this matter would be taken up at the March meeting of the Housing Commission. Other Commissioners comments focused on what immediate action can be taken by the Commission or the County to bring relief to residents; what leverage does the County have to get action from AHC to address complaints in a timely manner and a suggestion that the Management company be invited to speak to the Commission. Commissioners spoke to the report of residents' feeling intimidated. Commission Wimbush advised that tenants should contact the Human Rights Office to register these types of complaints. Housing Staff member Marie Randall was invited to provide an update on County actions to address the problem. She outlined current actions, including inspections to take place after April, monthly meetings with AHC and advocates, encourage tenants to communicate with code enforcement as necessary and better communication from AHC.

A representative from AHC provided a brief response regarding improvements taking place at the Serrano and that they were addressing the communication problems identified by residents.

Approval of Minutes – Minutes of the January 8th meeting was approved. Moved and seconded by Commissioner Whitaker and Commissioner Royer respectively.

Subcommittee Reports

Alternative Dispute Resolution – Commissioner Camardo reported on the first meeting held on January 30. Identified areas of research including overview of how this is done in adjacent jurisdictions; whether can be made mandatory under state law; VRLTA and what tools are required to implement to be effective. There may be overlap with the publicity subcommittee.

Outreach subcommittee - Commission Whitaker summarized the goals of the subcommittee as primarily to make resources known to tenants, especially highlighting the TLC as a resource; how represented on the County's website. First action to produce an informative one-page flyer with important contact numbers for County services for inclusion in welcome packages. Would like the County to require that flyers be included in property leasing information. Other suggested avenues for publicity included – attendance at events such as the Housing Expo, County Fair, and outreach to advocacy groups.

2023 Work Plan Discussion/suggested topics

- Commissioners discussed the work of the subcommittees to be the focus going forward
- Reports from Bu-Gata to provide updates
- Budget update, TLC could be convener of other groups – roundtable of landlords, panel of advocacy groups to discuss what are bigger challengers in the rental community. Annual report to highlight and make recommendations to the County Board to ensure rental market is robust and working to the advantage of landlords and tenants. Listening sessions with questions from the public suggested format.
- Regular updates of what types of complaints we receive. Calls report.

Meeting adjournment -Commissioner Camardo moved the motion and it was seconded by Commissioner Royer. Meeting ended at 8:25 p.m.