



Minutes
Ad Hoc on Housing and Resident Safety
Friday, June 24, 2022 @ 8:30 a.m.
City Council Conference Room

CALL TO ORDER

Council Member Wood called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

PRESENT

Council Member Spitzley, Chair
Council Member Wood, Vice-Chair
Council Member Brown, Member

OTHERS PRESENT

Sherrie Boak, Council Office Manager
Jim Smiertka, OCA
Belinda Fitzpatrick
Norma Bauer

MINUTES

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER BROWN TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM JUNE 3, 2022 AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED 3-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Fitzpatrick spoke on her Master Gardener certificate and naturalized gardening on her property. Ms. Fitzpatrick asked for Council to consider educating residents and code compliance on residential lots being used for gardens plots and landscaping. She admitted that she has discussions with Code Compliance in the past on issues on her property. Council Member Wood noted this naturalization of lots has come up before, and after this was explained to Code officers years ago, but there are newer officers, so it would make sense to train code officers maybe from MSU horticulture to provide details. Council Member Wood added that there is also a concern with line of site if people pull in and out of driveways and on corners.

Ms. Bauer spoke on sustainable housing and asked if there is a way to address regulations on small homes. Ms. Bauer provided examples of small houses in the City where there is a market for buying small homes. Council Member Wood spoke on the zoning in the past that prohibited small homes, noting with the new zoning there is options. Council Member Wood then asked Council Member Spitzley to have Ms. Stachowiak attend a future meeting to speak to the options. Council Member Spitzley confirmed that idea, and Ms. Bauer asked for builders or real estate agents could attend so they can hear what is now allowed with the new zoning the Committee spoke of.

PRESENTATIONS

"Community Court" – Judge Simmons

Per communications with court staff and Council staff during this meeting, Judge Simmons was not able to attend. Ms. Boak updated the Committee that an email was sent asking the Courts for what they would be interested in doing to update the Committee on a future presentation.

Discussion/Action

The Committee spoke on agencies to invite for future meetings before they made their final recommendations. Council Member Wood recapped that at earlier meetings the OCA was asked to look into amending the Human Rights Ordinance to address the concern the Committee heard from Nation Outside. The Committee asked to invite Ms. Stachowiak with Economic Development and Planning to speak on Form Based Code and small houses, along with the Realtors Association to the July 8, 2022 meeting.

Council Member Spitzley about the status from the last meetings on an ordinance for enforcement tenant relocation assistance. Council Member Wood stated the OCA opinion was that an ordinance or letter to the legislation was not the best avenue, but instead Council did a resolution that was adopted June 13, 2022. This addressed concerns that the Committee had in the past. Council Member Spitzley asked about the concern, and Mr. Smiertka stated OCA was not comfortable with the City of Jackson and Grand Rapids ordinances for enforcement.

Mr. Smiertka asked for details on the request OCA was supposed to be working on with the Human Rights Ordinance. Council Member Wood recapped the discussion when Nation Outside was present at a meeting and spoke about the concerns that someone's criminal past is considered first when attempting to rent. They want the Human Rights Ordinance to be amended to address this concern, and the criminal history not to be considered first in tenant/landlord transactions.

Council Member Spitzley asked if there is a mechanism in place to enforce penalties daily for unsafe conditions in a home. Mr. Smiertka stated it is under administrative code as civil infractions and there is a provision in there for subsequent fines.

Council Member Spitzley encouraged the Committee to strongly suggest a document that the Housing Ombudsman utilizes to educate the residents on what they should know before they sign a lease. Council Member Brown asked if the Housing Ombudsman is referring residents to the free outside legal services before they are in eviction court. Council Member Wood encouraged the Committee to make a recommendation that they believe the person in that position should be addressing that, along with the education piece when they do rental seminars, where they talk about "if your landlord doesn't do something, how do they address it". Council Members Spitzley and Wood both spoke briefly on what the intention of the Housing Ombudsman when it was created.

Council Member Brown updated the Committee on concerns he has heard from residents in Lansing Housing Commission properties and asked the Committee if there is a role the City has. Council Member Wood stated that any issues with Lansing Housing Commission would have to be taken up with their Board and tenant representative. Council Member Spitzley adding that the Board hires the Director and Council in the past have encouraged the Board to hold their meetings at the common area rooms in their residential facilities so the residents can attend. She also suggested Council Member Brown refer the residents to the Lansing Housing Commission website for their Board meeting schedule.

Council Member Brown asked if residents are asked to or have to move can the Housing Ombudsman find them housing. Council Member Spitzley stated that the intention for that was there when the position was created, but the current position is not doing what Council had intended when they created the position. When this positions as created from the HRCS Director, they indicated someone needed to have legal background, and if there were large

complexes that had serious problems but would be a conduit with a list of potential landlords that work with people with vouchers, section 8 that they could recommend.

No other topics of discussion.

Adjourn

Adjourned at 9:11 a.m.

Submitted by,

Sherrie Boak, Recording Secretary

Lansing City Council

Approved by the Committee July 8, 2022