

AGENDA

AD HOC on Homelessness & Solutions AGENDA FOR JUNE 13, 2023 AT 3:30 PM



Lansing City Hall, City Council Conference Room
124 W. Michigan Avenue, 10th Floor

To provide input or ask questions on any item that is listed on the agenda,
members of the public may contact the City Council at city.council@lansingmi.gov or (517) 483-4177 prior to the meeting.
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Council Member Brown, Chairperson

Council Member Hussain, Vice Chairperson

Council Member Spitzley, Member

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Roll Call**
3. **Minutes**
 - A. May 9, 2023
4. **Discussion/Action:**
 - B. DISCUSSION - Representative Emily Dievendorf on homelessness overview and intentions for the county
 - C. DISCUSSION - Committee Recommendations and Reporting
5. **Public Comment on Agenda Items (Up to 2 Minutes)**
6. **Other**
7. **Adjourn**

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MINUTES
Ad Hoc on Homelessness & Solutions
Tuesday, May 9, 2023 @ 3:30 p.m.
City Council Conference Room, 10th Floor City Hall

CALL TO ORDER

Council Member Brown called the meeting to order at 3:42pm

PRESENT

Council Member Jeffrey Brown, Chair
Council Member Adam Hussain, Vice Chair
Council Member Patricia Spitzley, Member

OTHERS PRESENT

Renee Richmond, Council Staff
Lisa Hagen-Lawrence, OCA
Matt Staples, OCA
Mike Lynn
Ulices Rosa, 54A District Court
Rita Dunlop
Jody Washington

MINUTES

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER SPITZLEY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MARCH 28, 2023.
MOTION CARRIED 3-0.

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER HUSSAIN TO AMMEND THE MINUTES OF APRIL 25, 2023 TO REMOVE LISA HAGEN-LAWRENCE AND ADD MATT STAPLES AS ATTENDING. MOTION CARRIED 3-0.

DISCUSSION/ACTION

DISCUSSION – Committee Recommendations and Reporting

Councilmember Brown indicated there were no presentations today and wanted to review what's been discussed previously and look towards recommendations and reporting out. Councilmember Spitzley noted the presenters so far have been very helpful but feels input from the Administration or HRCS is needed prior to any recommendations, otherwise what's submitted is delegitimized. Councilmember Hussain agreed and mentioned bringing in County and State officials, the Committee has to report to COW by September 11th, but can continue meetings afterward until December 11th.

Councilmember Spitzley spoke on last years Ad Hoc and suggested inviting Rep. Emily Dievendorf. Councilmember Brown then confirmed a few members of the Ingham County Board of Commissioners, and Councilmembers Hussain and Spitzley both suggested Rep. Elissa Slotkin, Sen. Sarah Anthony, and Sen. Sam Singh.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jody Washington spoke on that County Commissioners that she has talked to and that they have a bigger voice in the housing decision, it should be more regional and the reps are out there. She continued that one group/department should not be handling the money.

Mike Lynn mentioned he received a call from Krystal at LSJ for an update on the 24/hr warming centers and that the Mayor came back with a 2.2 million dollar cost, with a breakdown of approximately \$600,00 for a facility and \$500,000 for staffing, etc. No address was given and the is was for just one building. Councilmember Spitzley mentioned last years conversation with the mayor was it can't be one place and she had suggested opening Schmidt, Letts, Foster, and Gier Community Centers, but the response was a staffing issue and for people to work overnight was hard to find. Councilmember Brown commented he thought all these may fall with Bishop Maxwell and faith based initiative and getting volunteers. Ms. Washington added maybe open Otto as well, Derek Knox would open, the homeless can't see the alerts on TVs or computers, churches have offered to open up, adding when the fledge opened it was sanctioned.

Ulices Rosa mentioned he is currently trying to help a pregnant/homeless woman get into a shelter since Thursday, and the shelters say no. He also mentioned that the eviction side of things are higher since April 2019, passing pre-pandemic. During COVID people got all this money but nobody helped them be efficient with it, they just spent it and now are getting evicted. He added that he has tried helping over 500 families, need landlords involved, all state shelters. He concluded that they schedule people for eviction diversion but only about 10% may show up. Councilmember Brown asked how many staff Mr. Rosa had, he replied it was just him.

Councilmember Spitzley stated as she recalls the Housing Ombudsman was created as the one stop for all folks, initially was looking at a legal background but not a lawyer, to offer direction and provide help with rental clinics, education and knowing their rights if evicted and/or red tagged, in addition to working with HRCS Department, work with all departments and based out of the Mayor's Office. When the previous administration left, Joe McDonald needed somewhere to go and he was placed in this position and in HRCS. Councilmember Brown asked if Mr. Rosa is working with Joe, Mr. Rosa answered that Mr. McDonald will reach out monthly with some questions, what he does with the information he does not know.

Rita Dunlop introduced herself, she is with RPOAMM, she wanted to come and see how she and other owners can help. Councilmember Brown asked if she's worked with HRCS, she indicated she isn't aware of who they are. Councilmember Brown then asked if her group works with the Housing Ombudsman to help the homeless get placed into units that they may have available, Mr. Dunlop answered at this time they are creating a list, she's received lots of referrals, adding some owners are reluctant to rent/house to the homeless due to they've been isolated and may destroy property and vacant units will not be furnished. Councilmember Brown noted that working with HRCS can help with barriers, and addressing housing, mental health, rehabilitation, etc.

Councilmember Brown asked how many owners, Mr. Rosa answered 135 landlords. Councilmember Spitzley made a recommendation to figure out how much to operate the existing community centers (Schmidt, Letts, Foster, Gier, and Otto). On average Lansing has 10 cold days/year, so to staff, have coffee and a Community Police Officer, maybe an EMS on hand.

Ms. Hagen-Lawrence left at 4:50pm

Councilmember Brown inquired budget wise about taking for example 200k from one department and 100k from another to support eviction prevention and warming centers. Councilmember Spitzley commented they continue with the same issue of too many people doing the same thing. Councilmember Hussain noted Mr. Rosa is doing what the housing ombudsman is doing.

Councilmember Brown asked if funding is going to the housing ombudsman, Councilmember Spitzley stated that is a question for the Internal Auditor.

OTHER

ADJOURN

Adjourned at 4:54pm

Submitted by

Renee Richmond, Recording Secretary

Lansing City Council

Approved by the Committee on

DRAFT



RENTER'S BILL OF RIGHTS



A renter's bill of rights is a suite of legal mechanisms that protect renters from landlord exploitation. These laws work to affirm the rights of renters against health hazards, harassment, and displacement. While framed here as a cohesive policy tool, these tenant protections are often enacted independently. The "bill of rights" terminology points to a broad narrative grounded in a universal right to safe and healthy housing. This coordinated framework also acknowledges that one or two solutions alone will not be enough to guarantee renter protection.

CLAUSES THAT MAY BE INCLUDED IN A RENTER'S BILL OF RIGHTS

- **Fee limitations** restrict application fees and/or the percentage of rent that a landlord can charge for a rental deposit.
- **Relocation assistance** stipulates that a landlord must pay a certain amount towards moving costs for tenants who are displaced by housing rehabilitation, demolition, or other breaks in the lease agreement.
- **Preventing consideration of criminal history** is an anti-discrimination measure wherein landlords cannot consider the criminal history of an applicant when evaluating potential tenants.
- **First come, first served** requires landlords to accept the first rental application that meets their publicly stated rental requirements.
- **Renter agency for repairs** allows tenants to take care of repairs themselves and charge the landlord accordingly; it is a policy aimed at landlords who often take a long time or refuse outright to make necessary repairs.
- **Surprise building inspections** work to enforce landlord accountability by increasing the frequency of city inspections to assure the quality and safety of rental units.
- **Right to organize** prevents landlords from interfering if renters decide to form a tenants' union.

Failure to comply with State & Fed law

- **Just-cause eviction** strictly limits when and how landlords can remove tenants by forcing them to prove that the situation meets a certain standard to justify eviction.
- **Adequate notice for rent changes** means that landlords must give a certain amount of warning before they raise rents.
- **Right of first refusal** applies to when a landlord puts a building up for sale, and gives tenants the power to band together and put up the money to purchase the building for themselves; in some cases, tenants may also assign this right to a local nonprofit like a community land trust.
- **Right-to-counsel** is a guarantee that all renters should have publicly subsidized legal representation in housing court.

Know Your Rights

In addition to the legal protections themselves, public campaigns around a renter's bill of rights serve as an important reminder that renters have rights in the first place. This can help to empower renters to build power for themselves in other ways, like setting up a **tenants' union** or connecting with tenants' rights organizations.



Submitted @ Mtg.



CURRENT STATUS OF TENANT PROTECTIONS

There are several long-standing federal- and state-level renter protections. At the federal level, renter protections are primarily regulated by the Fair Housing Act (FHA). This Act was part of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 and signed into law by President Johnson. It prohibits housing discrimination (including rental discrimination) based on religion, race, sex, and national origin. Upon later amendment, these protections were expanded to account for disability and family status. State-wide protections vary significantly, but the Department of Housing and Urban Development provides a central repository for state-by-state regulations.

The demand for municipal level tenant protections to bolster insufficient state and federal regulations has grown as the displacement crisis has worsened. Washington D.C., for example, enacted a tenants bill of rights in 2015, which even requires landlords to supply rental applicants with a copy of the legislation. Other municipalities have recently passed increasingly stringent renter protection laws including Seattle, Portland, and Palo Alto.

Other cities been focusing efforts on right-to-counsel. The most robust example comes out of New York City, which in 2017 became the first place in the country to guarantee a lawyer to every tenant facing eviction, dedicating \$155 million to the effort. Cities in Pennsylvania, California, Massachusetts, along with Washington D.C. are currently pursuing similar **right-to-counsel** measures.

CONSIDERATIONS

Local Context

Just as the rental market is highly variable from one municipality to the next, the obstacles that renters face depends on market conditions, landlord incentives, and existing housing policy. A renter's bill of rights presents an opportunity to examine the landscape as it currently stands and address it accordingly.

Burden of Enforcement

Once legal protections are in place, enforcement remains an obstacle. In cases where landlords don't follow these laws, the burden falls on the renter to both know their rights and take their complaint to the city. Furthermore, municipalities often do not have the resources nor the infrastructure to enforce these laws fully.

Legal Challenges

Many of the measures included in a renter's bill of rights directly challenge a power structure upheld by decades of legal precedent affirming the rights of private property owners. Because of this, municipalities are likely to face legal challenges to newly enshrined renter protection laws. In Seattle, for example, a judge overturned the city's **first come, first served** rental law, declaring it unconstitutional. The legal challenge, brought by a group of landlords, claimed that these requirements violated their rights to property, free speech, and due process.

