



MINUTES
Ad Hoc on Homelessness & Solutions
Tuesday, June 13, 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 3:32pm

PRESENT

Council Member Jeffrey Brown, Chair
Council Member Adam Hussain, Vice-Chair
Council Member Patricia Spitzley, Member – excused

OTHERS PRESENT

Renee Richmond, Council Staff
Lisa Hagen-Lawrence, OCA
Matt Staples, OCA
Natasha Atkinson, Legislative Director for Rep. Emily Dievendorf
Kim Coleman, HRCS
Joe McDonald, HRCS
Toni Young, HRCS
Ulices Rosa, 54A District Court
William Walker
Norma Bauer
Belinda Fitzpatrick
Jesse Lasorda
Trisha Washburn
Rita Dunlop
Councilmember Jackson

MINUTES

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER HUSSAIN TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MAY 09, 2023 AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED 2-0.

DISCUSSION/ACTION

DISCUSSION – Representative Emily Dievendorf on homelessness overview and intentions for the county

Natasha Atkinson introduced herself as the Legislative Director for Representative Emily Dievendorf's office. She stated that the Representative is taking a strong stance on not only homelessness but also renter's rights, understanding that housing is a right and that there is work to do to bring equity. They are proposing a homeless bill of rights and renter's bill of rights. When look at renters they have just cause evictions which effect the people that have month to month leases and how they can get evicted and what stands for an eviction.

Councilmember Jackson arrived at 3:34pm

Ms. Atkinson continued that from the people reaching out to our office is on the verge of homelessness, return citizens and discrimination within the housing industry that can prevent people from getting housing, they've been working with nation outside, also discussion relocation issues on red tag houses and know that's been a burden on city. Their office has also had talks with the mayor and about the response with the city to re-house those who are in red tag homes. Noticing with Red tags there are two different circumstances. One is re-housing and asking landlords to take the cost on, and two is red and pink tags where they can provide assistance to the landlords understanding that, in talks with the association of landlords, the majority of those who are housing are not wealthy, so burden of cost is on them as well and how can we alleviate. Their office has heard from Code Enforcement and that if people reached out earlier and explain the situation, both may be able to compromise and get in front of it. The want to balance the scales and protect the tenants but provide the landlords with resources so not having to go that route.

Councilmember Jackson left at 3:38pm

Councilmember Brown asked in talking with constituents where small mom/pop landlords versus the big corporations, if there is support or programs they are putting together. Ms. Atkinson noted in talks they've discussed a requirement that goes along with a renewal to license to rent, possibly require an educational class for the landlords to take and home buyers and have possibly presenters to talk and educate landlords on the barriers to housing, how to properly protect themselves in doing wrong things. Knowing their rights could alleviate the stress of the outcomes.

Councilmember Brown asked Mr. Rosa what group he was working with, and he responded the Rental Property Association of Mid-Michigan (RPAOMM). Ms. Atkinson believes the group they've spoken to is in Ypsilanti. Her office is seeing that landlords want to be accountable, responsible and want to help, and not have constant overturn of tenants. Their Renter's Bill is almost 27 bills packed into one package. There is equity in the bill and not attacking the landlords, clear outline who is responsible for what.

Councilmember Brown asked how the residents find out about the bill, where can they look. Ms. Atkinson indicated the bills are in the proposed phase and have not gone to the housing committee yet. I would recommend reaching out to some of the agencies like Nation Outside, Tony Gant's office or their representative's office. Ms. Atkinson gave the phone number and email for her office which is 517-373-2277, email is Emilydievendorf@house.mi.gov also they can find it on the State of Michigan page. They are District 77 and are located in Court Anderson House building, Office #1096. People do not need an appointment to walk in but may need one to have a discussion.

Councilmember Hussain asked Ms. Atkinson spoke of a 25 bill package and talk a lot about equitable housing which can mean a lot of things. Have they in part of this package do away with exclusionary zoning, asking because some municipalities are moving forward with their own housing code. Adding in reality as an example, if someone is poor, they don't have to live in the City of Lansing. But that said it's difficult to get local partners to take on some responsibilities, so are you looking at that. Ms. Atkinson responded that is a good question for the Representative to answer but what she does know, is there has been talks and no-one has stepped forward to propose that yet. She knows the Representative's position is absolutely not and nobody should be told to live in or not live in a certain area. Councilmember Hussain also asked in talking about landlords financial responsibility, what does that look like. Ms. Atkinson answered the way they are working with LSB (the lawyers that help them) discussing relocation up to certain amount and size, like a family currently in a 3 bedroom apartment and a landlord can't put them in a single room hotel. She added there has to be a cap they are not sure yet and looking for advice on how to enforce, and take into consideration, it is going to be difficult to put a line on a certain amount so might have to be done based on number of units rented.

Councilmember Hussain asked when finding someplace to move a tenant to is it going to be 60-90 days, or when the property is in compliance. Ms. Atkinson stated consideration will have to be made pending how many units they may need. Councilmember Hussain also mentioned that Ms. Atkinson referenced fair housing at the state level, what does that look like, and is that going to be applied consistently across the state or more for municipalities to opt into. Ms. Atkinson stated their fair chance housing is in reference to their housing bill of rights, and Councilmember Brown said Nation Outside advocates for 2nd chances and also calls their proposal the same thing. Ms. Atkinson acknowledged that Rep. Aiyash is working with Nation Outside through the housing committee as and once it does pass, they hope it would be state as opposed to municipality.

Councilmember Hussain inquired about any data that says most landlords are small business owners with multiple homes or is it an assumption. Ms. Atkinson responded they got their numbers from MSHDA and unsure how it was collected.

Ms. Atkinson went on to talk about the homeless bill of rights, this will aid the population significantly on how to assist in rapid re-housing, employment, education, etc. Councilmember Brown asked for elaboration on that, Ms. Atkinson stated like the need of the warming/cooling centers, goal is to get funding to implement more workers into working with the homeless and money to agencies who cannot provide for rapid re-housing. Councilmember Brown asked Mr. Rosa to introduce himself and explain what he has dealt with for rapid re-housing. Mr. Rosa said for him it is folks in shelters with section 8, and vouchers trying to get into section 8 housing but because of the red tags they expire can't get in and people on the street can't get into shelters. The evictions most recently the May pre-COVID they had 81 writs, this May 123 writs. 52% increase. Rapids rehousing is just a buzz word nothing is happening rapidly. Ms. Atkinson added they are hoping for budget money to go into programming, fund development as MSHDA had a great program for owners for age stock to allow funding to repair and receive incentives for renting to people with section 8 vouchers, etc. Councilmember Brown stated after some talks landlords are reluctant because of damages, and Ms. Atkinson suggested maybe a deposit for damages.

Councilmember Brown brought up employment and helping those who can and want to work, but may have gaps in history or lack of education, it's challenging enough for those that do have the education but those that are homeless is even more difficult. Ms. Atkinson agreed it is going to be complicated and there will need to be a shift culturally. They hear business owners can't find workers and have had to change hours.

Councilmember Jackson returned at 4:06pm

Councilmember Hussain asked if she had any bill numbers, Ms. Atkinson concluded by handing out a paper with the renter's bill of rights, indicating that it is preliminary and the bill itself is a 27 page package, once available she would send to Ms. Richmond.

Councilmember Jackson left at 4:13pm

DISCUSSION – Committee Recommendations and Reporting

Councilmember Hussain mentioned that Councilmember Spitzley has specific recommendations and he'd like to see all the minutes to review for the next meetings discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Norma Bauer spoke on the challenge to provide equitable services like the federal department does. The five social determinates of health are; economically stable, adequate education, adequate health care, do you live in safe housing, and do you live in a safe neighborhood. She continued to note that hoarding is a mental illness as well.

Jesse Lasorda spoke on the town hall meeting on Saturday mentioning red tags and Rep. Dievendorf mentioned no money for code enforcement. He is wondering on the percentage of those that are homeless and at peace at being homeless, that some are.

Councilmember Brown asked Ms. Richmond to get an update on the red/pink tags of owner occupied vs. rental from code if possible.

Trisha Washburn is a volunteer for Nation Outside and spoke on the discrimination of offenders with criminal backgrounds and they are denied employment after being released because of fear of re-offending. How are they going to get job skills, and she believes they need the fair change housing ordinance. Councilmember Brown asked law to speak on that, Ms. Hagen-Lawrence noted a request from the last Ad Hoc on Housing Safety they did a preliminary draft, but it would need significant changes, and then morphed into Public Safety Committee, then to pursue on more state level for consistency. Councilmember Hussain noted he has spoke with Tony Gant and like municipalities like Ann Arbor, he is not willing to pass an ordinance just to pass.

Elinda Fitzpatrick spoke on her multiple monitoring fees and if she had that money, she could repair her homes.

Rita Dunlop spoke that she has 28 units and is open to high risk and looses money even before damages. It is important to get small and large companies on board to help.

OTHER

ADJOURN

Adjourned at 4:44pm

Submitted by

Renee Richmond, Recording Secretary

Lansing City Council

Approved by the Committee on June 27, 2023