



**MINUTES**  
**Ad Hoc on Homelessness & Solutions**  
**Special Meeting**  
**Tuesday, August 18, 2023 @ 1:00 p.m.**  
**City Council Conference Room, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor City Hall**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Council Member Brown called the meeting to order at 1:02pm

**PRESENT**

Council Member Jeffrey Brown, Chair  
Council Member Adam Hussain, Vice-Chair  
Council Member Patricia Spitzley, Member – arrived at 1:22pm

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Renee Richmond, Council Administrative Assistant  
Lisa Hagen-Lawrence, OCA  
Matt Staples, OCA  
Rep. Emily Dievendorf  
Natasha Atkinson, Rep. Dievendorf office  
Kim Coleman, HRCS Director  
Toni Young, HRCS  
Joseph McDonald, Housing Ombudsman  
Willard Walker, HRCS  
Rita Dunlop  
Ulises Rose, 54-A Court  
Paul Anderson

**MINUTES**

COUNCILMEMBER HUSSAIN SUGGESTED TO TABLE THE MINUTES OF JULY 25, 2023 FOR NOW.

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER HUSSAIN TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF AUGUST 8, 2023 AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED 2-0.

**PRESENTATIONS**

Representative Emily Dievendorf

Representative Dievendorf spoke on and handed out the Michigan Renter's Bill of Rights, HB 4919, and the White House Blueprint for Renter's Bill of Rights. Acknowledging the homeless policy is to exist as a complimentary policy to the other housing legislation.

Councilmember Brown left at 1:34pm and returned at 1:35pm

Representative Dievendorf continued that investing in rebuilding the aging housing, rebalance power of the landlords and tenants. Housing standards that are uniform, and hold accountable, they are also looking at closing loopholes towards Migrant Farmer and Domestic Worker Housing. She spoke on decriminalizing homelessness, health and safety, and rent control and rent caps.

Councilmember Brown asked about the challenges of housing vouchers and when what is needed isn't available, like rent for one person is \$1,000 but they only get a voucher for \$700 and if the Representative is looking at that. Rep. Dievendorf mentioned they can speak to MSHDA as they are considering all costs as not every community has or needs the same amounts.

Councilmember Hussain stated his concerns of looking at rent control and allowing an option how do we ensure it doesn't exasperate the concentration of property and what you're going to see a worsening of that concentration of property and do away with exclusionary zoning and bring in resources to them.

Councilmember Spitzley arrived at 1:22pm

Rep. Dievendorf spoke on the school challenge and that the bill of rights guarantees the unhoused populations have access to all their needs, programs, equitable access to resources and explicitly list protective right to public education for unhoused youth and the right to transportation. Also looking at creating an application process to educate those that want to be landlords. Councilmember Spitzley added that is critical and noted in last years Ad Hoc it was mentioned when applying for a renters certificate they received a package of information as to their responsibilities, when they don't comply, they were given the information. Rep Dievendorf included requirement of full disclosure to renters, and prior to eviction work with them maybe mediation prior to court, given them resources for assistance including notices of rent increases maybe escrow makes sense, and finally eviction expungement.

Ms. Atkinson spoke on rent control about exclusionary housing, currently in the House the lead Rep. from Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor have expressed interest in rent control. Councilmember Hussain asked if there is a list of adopters of rent control, Rep. Dievendorf stated she can provide one. Councilmember Brown asked the public if they had any questions before Rep. Dievendorf had to leave.

Ms. Dunlop mentioned she is a representative for the landlord association and they are trying to do get their concerns heard, some are reluctant to rent open homes to homelessness because of property damage and the lack of qualified people to complete the repairs needed. Rep. Dievendorf replied she is aware of one person who should be able to afford rent but because unhoused for years they have no credit or payment history so spend all their social security benefits on hotels to be safe. Adding when it comes to repairs if the landlord is taking too long the tenant should be able to find someone. Speaking on creating standards for rental house inspections, and changes for survivors of domestic violence and breaking leases as well as returning citizens. Councilmember Spitzley agreed on the escrow portion and mentioned having OCA look at a mechanism if a red tag house and people have to leave, who is responsible for paying for that hotel. Rep. Dievendorf concluded that everything they listed in their Bill of Rights is also in the White House BOR and would be requirements for all communities.

HRCS Department – Kim Coleman, Joe McDonald, and Toni Young

Ms. Coleman asked Mr. McDonald and Ms. Young to address items 16, 19 and 21 on the topics list.

Mr. McDonald first noted the #1 priority as a city is to provide the relocation assistance so when a house is red tagged it's the landlord responsibility. To make sure income discrimination becomes illegal and landlord can't discriminate based on vouchers. They are currently working on program where landlords can accept Section 8, based on if tenant damaged property it would be covered under this. Make sure whatever is done in escrow it is codified with state law. When landlords are not doing their part in fixing maintenance that the tenant can themselves. Also expunging the eviction records possibly automatically done after certain time. Applications are often given to third party to "score" and

something still shows up. Also, Giving more than 30 day notice, those doing month to month, disabled, or elderly need more time.

Councilmember Brown asked with a voucher they can do month to month, Mr. McDonald confirmed with an initial year lease is required then can do month-month. Ms. Dunlop added she rents to high risk so month-month protects her some. Councilmember Brown asked Ms. Dunlop if she charges more for month-month, she stated no she does not but some people will.

Councilmember Spitzley added those on Section 8 need protection when it comes to month-month, after a year landlords will raise rent or kick them out.

Mr. McDonald continued about rent control and limiting increases like anything about 10% notice would be required to tenant. Councilmember Brown asked Rep. Dievendorf if there was anything she wanted to hear on from HRCS. Rep. Dievendorf asked for continued updates on red tags, which hotels are used, and how are they providing emergency temporary shelters, and Councilmember Spitzley asked about transportation for those in school. Councilmember Brown asked Mr. McDonald on the red tags, Ms. Coleman stated that would come from the Economic Development & Planning office, but they are currently using Travel Lodge and Red Roof Inn in Eaton County and shuttles are being used for the school district, confirming they are not using Causeway Bay. Mr. McDonald added his understanding since hotels are not in Lansing, they are not subject to the requirements of housing codes just for fire standards or improvements/alterations.

Ms. Atkinson asked when placed in a hotel, are you providing disclosure to them that school board is doing transportation, she is hearing from community that parents are unaware they need to reach out. Ms. Coleman indicated they have a representative and the agency (Advent House) on the CoC and they work directly with the family to make sure.

Mr. McDonald continued and spoke on mobile homes and it would be nice if they were subject to same standards, can inspect now but only upon request. Councilmember Spitzley asked if he was looking for statewide or local change, Mr. McDonald confirmed statewide. Councilmember Brown asked for a recommendation on the record for mobile home inspections., and Ms. Atkinson confirmed it is in the Renters BOR as well. She added that typically the mobile home is paid for but if they fail to pay lot rent then the mobile park owners can take the mobile home. They are in talks with MSHDA and mobile home tenants association to change uniform standard and make it statewide.

Mr. McDonald added for rent control maybe a 5% cap, also that the rent amount advertised is the actual rent amount, if water or heat not included then add and say flat amount for everything. Once they get behind rent it gets out of control and they can't catch back up. Lastly, inclusionary zoning another possible way to increase possible tax incentives for apartment owners, maybe requiring 10% affordable housing. Councilmember Spitzley noted that is a priority for the administration to adopt along with zoning.

Councilmember Brown stated he was going to hit some of the touchpoints:

- ***#3 - Review and discuss City of Lansing Supported Agencies and funding allocation amounts.*** Ms. Young stated that was provided as part of the budget, Councilmember Brown asked if they would resend to the Committee with a breakdown of amounts each agency receives, Ms. Young confirmed she could put something together.
- ***#4 - Review and discuss regional outreach and collaboration. What are other municipal partners doing to address homelessness crisis and how is HRCS working with our regional partners.*** Ms. Young stated on the county level they work with CMH-CEI, Ingham County Health Dept., Ingham County Corrections Board, and the CoC. Mr. McDonald has been working with the Ingham County Trust Fund the county set aside \$9 million for affordable housing out of the ARPA for over 3 years, some spent for Walter French and Homer Rehab. He referenced ***#8 – Identify the total number of affordable housing units in the***

region i.e., *Lansing vs East Lansing, Holt, Mason, Grand Ledge, DeWitt, Okemos, and Haslett* and handed out a Tri-County Data Summary booklet for the Committee to review.

- **#9 - Discuss advocacy and legal support for residents of Lansing having difficulty with “slumlords” and code compliance issues.** Mr. McDonald informed the Committee that Legal Services provides advocacy and legal support for residents, Councilmember Brown asked if they are a provider as in the City give funding, and Ms. Coleman confirmed. Mr. Staples added it is to provide services to low income residents for Ingham, Eaton, Clinton, Shiawassee, and Livingston counties.

Councilmember Brown asked Mr. Rosa how 54-A is connected to Legal Services, he responded they are in every pre-trial and will meet with tenants that wish to. He added that he will periodically refer clients to Legal Services if they fail to meet at pre-trial or didn't show. Mr. McDonald stated he also refers to Legal Services.

- **#10 - Review and discuss how the City of Lansing collaborates and/or provides support to Lansing residents/ Lansing School District students and families who are facing homelessness or are currently homeless.** Ms. Coleman indicated families work directly with the assigned case worker at the contracted agency. Ms. Young added it's required by law if there are children in shelters, they contact the school district.
- **#11 - Define and discuss required soft skills and DEI training for provider agencies by an outside organization that is receiving HRCS funds to help the homeless and other vulnerable populations.** Ms. Coleman indicated they didn't understand the question, Councilmember Brown indicated there were concerns that agency's delivering services may need training like customer service, DEI, etc. Ms. Coleman noted they are not opposed to that, adding working with people with disabilities as well.
- **#7 - Review and discuss 24-hour warming and cooling centers.** Ms. Coleman informed the Committee they budgeted and have enough money for a 6 month facility for a few years Nov-Apr and would be open from 7pm-7am, targeted Letts Community Center as a central location and have budgeted \$120,000 and should run for a couple years. Councilmember Spitzley noted the other centers would just be activated during the code red/blue and constant for 6 months and by doing so you are guaranteeing staff, Ms. Coleman confirmed. Councilmember Brown asked if they worked with private, community or non-profit foundations for volunteers and what would the cost be for a 24/7 with staff, Ms. Coleman said not explored at this time, for a 24/7 12 month period it would be approximately \$800,000 for staff and services, does not include facility. Mr. McDonald added that during a code red/blue that CATA and the libraries are available too. Councilmember Hussain stated that their intent was to activate the centers for accessibility for populations dealing with the code red/blue, having one central location some people won't want to travel from South Lansing to Downtown. Ms. Coleman indicated they've received a number of requests on what people want. Ms. Atkinson indicated that Rep. Dievendorf office ideally would like one central location with wrap around services and downtown area is the highest population. Ms. Atkinson added they provided a different model than the city is currently using and will provide the Committee with it. Councilmember Hussain asked if they are talking about warming/cooling or spot with wrap around services because that is a shelter, Ms. Atkinson noted the city uses the word “center” and the state uses “shelter”. Councilmember Brown asked what the administration expectation is, Ms. Coleman said the Mayor expects one central location until they can get a flow of funds the review. Councilmember Spitzley asked then the \$800,000 is to support that vision, Ms. Coleman confirmed and they are currently working to get something in place for the upcoming winter. Councilmember Brown and Spitzley asked if there was something in place for someone to see what is available 24/7, like a one page sheet that show what is open and from what times, Ms. Coleman said that can be arranged. Councilmember Hussain said to partner with CATA as well, Ms. Coleman agreed.
- **#14 - Review and discuss the exact job description and duties of the Housing Ombudsmen.** The Committee asked if a job description was available written or verbal, Mr. McDonald indicated he can do both but didn't have a written one with him, stating it is a policy and direct service position, handles all the calls and emails for housing/homelessness, online forms that come in, and responsible for eviction assistance/diversion and it is a crisis management position. Councilmember Brown asked with 211 and 311 if he tracks calls and if he needed an assistant. Mr. McDonald confirmed he is behind, averages 25+ calls daily along with emails. Ms. Coleman confirmed they are collecting data, are behind but are restructuring, they may ask for additional staff. Mr. McDonald also confirmed they are not utilizing 311 at this time for their department but is forthcoming for tracking purposes. Councilmember Hussain asked what percentage of the calls are filtered out, Mr. McDonald couldn't say for sure but does receive out of region calls too. Councilmember Brown made a recommendation for HRCS to be online with 311.
- **#12 - Review and discuss a Medical Respite model to triage and serve people facing homelessness or who are currently homeless - #17 Review and discuss how city of Lansing is collaborating and coordinating care for people with mental health issues who are facing or currently homeless.** Ms. Atkinson requested #12 & #17 together, and Councilmember Brown asked how HRCS

is coordinating with groups and mental health issues. Ms. Coleman noted they are researching several respite models, short term respite care for those experiencing homelessness and a safe place to recover, some hospitals discharge people that have follow-ups needed but they don't have a home to go to and may have to go to a hotel to recover. They otherwise coordinate with agency's like Advent House to provide services like bus tokens.

Councilmember Hussain left at 3:03pm and returned at 3:05pm

Councilmember Brown asked if a central resources for a breakdown of what agency has available for case workers, mental health therapists, etc. is available. Ms. Young answered no but they can do a survey of agency's to gather information, and asked if they are looking in general or of unhoused, Councilmember Brown said in general. Both Ms. Young and Ms. Coleman stated in general is more difficult because it can be defined many ways but they could begin with what the housing and homelessness network have available and identify primary providers to measure staff and functions.

Ms. Coleman mentioned filling gaps and that many people struggle with disability's and need to look at best way to work with most vulnerable, seniors are fragile, and a family of 8 they are in a space for family of 5. Ms. Atkinson stated their relocation assistance the landlord is responsible for finding similar accommodations to what they were in. Councilmember Brown asked if a rental is red tagged and can't be fixed, Ms. Atkinson stated there are emergency funds from MSHDA, also Section 8's are provided through multiple resources like MSHDA, Lansing Housing Commission (LHC), MSHDA can only do certain things because the way funded and LHC is different. Councilmember Spitzley reiterated her previous comment from last years Ad Hoc on having something to give landlords for housing someone in hotels, what resources are available, recommendations for school process, etc. Councilmember Brown agreed on a recommendation for that process. Ms. Atkinson suggested reaching out to Mark Garcia at MSHDA for resources available.

Councilmember Brown asked if Ms. Dunlop had questions, she suggested for red tag houses, some agency's buy insurance programs for stuff like floods that are no fault of either party. Councilmember Brown asked how something like that is dealt with when they don't want to submit a claim because rates may go up, Mr. McDonald noted they would have to go through the State for victim rights compensation.

## **DISCUSSION/ACTION**

### **DISCUSSION – Committee Recommendations and Reporting**

- i. Resolution establishing the Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness & Solutions #2023-014
- ii. 2023 Committee Minutes

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

## **OTHER**

## **ADJOURN**

Adjourned at 3:28pm

Submitted by

Renee Richmond, Recording Secretary

Lansing City Council

Approved by the Committee on September 18, 2023