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**STAMFORD SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2013
MAYOR'S CONFERENCE ROOM – 10TH FLOOR
STAMFORD GOVERNMENT CENTER
888 WASHINGTON BOULEVARD
STAMFORD, CT 06901**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Sandra Peterkin, Co-Chair of the Social Services Commission at 4:09 p.m.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The June minutes were approved unanimously.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF REPORT OF ACTION

The June Action Report was approved unanimously.

IV. VIKKI COOPER, DEPUTY CORPORATION COUNSEL – TO DISCUSS DISCRIMINATION

Vikki explained that the commission has the power to decide over discrimination cases. In addition to discrimination cases, the board has the power over housing and employment cases. That is, if an individual brings the complaint to the commission. At the request of the members, Vikki has agreed to return to the next meeting after researching the history of how discrimination was handled in the past. Kate Lombardo asks the group who would determine fair rent. Sandra reminds the group that most of the complaints are rent increases or living conditions being up to par. Vikki agreed that complaints would mainly involve situations where the landlord raises the rent for any reason. She affirms that the purpose of the commission is to conduct checks and balances. Steve Kolenberg reminds the group that the State Statutes should be used and taken into consideration when determining fair rent.

V. COMMISSION PROCEDURES FOR FAIR RENT ISSUES

Sharona informs the group that after contacting the complainants, she found that one tenant moved, one was tenant was evicted, one tenant was unreachable and one tenant was inquiring about the commission. She has assigned numbers to all the cases as well as mailed packets to two individuals. The question of who will be conducting inspections for the Social Services commission was brought up. Ted assured the members that Vin Tufo of the Housing Authority has offered and will conduct the inspections for the commission. The group voiced their concern about what to do if the inspectors discover unhealthy or unsanitary conditions. Should they report it? Anne Fountain tells the group that inspectors are obligated to report these conditions and ultimately the health department is informed and takes action.

VI. PROCESS OF EDUCATING PUBLIC OF THE COMMISSION'S EFFORTS

Sandy and Kate as well as other members of the committee have the intention of educating the public on the services provided by the Social Services Commission. Unlike Norwalk, Stamford does not have a Fair Rent office that would have informational material for the public. Kate Lombardo suggests using the newspaper as a way to inform the public. As the Director of The Food Bank, Kate offered to reach out to its member agencies and programs to also help with this effort. Sandy feels that placing a flyer in the school children's backpack can be effective. The flyer can be used to educate non-profit organization so they can spread the word. Dan McCabe adds that a good source would be the Board of Realtors. Anne

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Fountain feels that creating a fact sheet can be helpful to promote their efforts. Vikki adds that she does not see problem with getting the word out and using the internet to advocate may be effective as well. However, she advises the commission to take measured steps to ensure their process is in place and functioning. Ted concurs with Vikki's view that this initiative should be taken in small steps to make sure that nothing is left out. Ted adds that neighborhood associations could be key in getting the word out.

Steve Kolenberg proposed calling Norwalk to find out about their advertising initiative. He will be reaching out to a contact in Norwalk and will report his findings at the September Social Services Commission meeting. Kate Lombardo agreed to share a list of Stamford's Neighborhood Associations which she will bring to the next meeting.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

The group agreed that the best way to communicate with each other is through email. The agenda and minutes will be sent to the co-chairs and they will distribute to the other members via email.

IX. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned by Kate Lombardo at 5:28 p.m.