

MAYOR
CAROLINE SIMMONS



Social Services Commission
Caroline Temlock Teichman, Chair
Kathleen Lombardo
Juan Ospina
Ellen Petersen
Renai Strother

Stamford Social Services Commission Meeting
888 Washington Blvd.
Stamford, CT. 06901

Tuesday, December 13, 2022, 5:00 P.M. Via Zoom
Draft Minutes

Attendees

Commissioners:
Caroline Temlock Teichman, Chair
Kate Lombardo
Ellen Petersen
Renai Strother

City of Stamford:
Sharona Cowan, Social Services Director
Reverend Winton Hill, Public Safety Liaison

Members of the Public:
Rafie Podolsky, Attorney, Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut
Rashida Rattray, Education and Outreach Coordinator, Connecticut Fair Housing Center
Sarah White, Attorney, Connecticut Fair Housing Center

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Caroline Temlock Teichman at 5:10 P.M.

Minutes

The minutes of the October 11, 2022 meeting were approved unanimously.

Presentation

Rafie Podolsky, an attorney with the Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut and Sarah White, an attorney with the Connecticut Fair Housing Center spoke about Fair Rent Commissions. Attendees were then invited to ask questions.

Points covered included:

- Some background on Fair Rent Commissions in Stamford and statewide.

- A discussion of the type of complaint that is focused on conditions of a rental property that have changed. A tenant may file a complaint if the rental charge has remained the same, but the conditions have deteriorated or services which were previously included, e.g., charges for utilities, are now the responsibility of the tenant.
- A Commission may group complaints from a single building into one hearing. However, the Commission must render an individual decision for each complaint.
- Rising costs for landlords are one of the thirteen considerations Commissions take into account in determining whether a rental charge is excessive.
- A decision rendered by the Fair Rent Commission is an order, therefore it is a violation of law if a landlord/tenant does not comply. As such, possible enforcement actions may include criminal sanction or a cease and desist order. The best avenue for enforcement is through the City attorney.
- The Commission's order can include a "no retaliation" clause.
- Some tax credits for housing are expiring. Currently, the Connecticut Fair Housing Center is looking for ways communities/landlords might extend subsidization or lower costs.
- Rafie Podolsky encourages Fair Rent Commissions to recognize the scope and breadth of their powers.

Report from the Social Services Director

Two new Fair Rent complaints have been filed. Of the older ones still pending, four are from the same property.

The Mayor's Office is creating an Advisory Committee on Older Adults to consider some of the issues formerly in the purview of the Commission on Aging.

The new employee for Mandated Services is onboard and will ease the Director's involvement in that function.

The Department got approval to hire a permanent part-time employee, rather than seasonal employees, for tracking eviction storage items, allowing for more consistency. The Post-vention Team has been implemented to provide a coordinated City response to needs that arise after crises such as suicides and/or untimely deaths.

Old Business

The Commission voted unanimously in favor of holding a Special Meeting on January 10, 2023 to discuss the proposed bylaws.

New Business

The Commission members unanimously approved the schedule for 2023 meetings. Meetings will be held the second Wednesday of each month at 5 P.M. via Zoom. The Zoom link for each meeting will be published on the agenda for that meeting.

The Social Services Director and the Chair of the Social Services Commission will meet with Corporation Counsel to discuss the Commission's Human Rights responsibilities on Tuesday, December 20, 2022.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:38 P.M.