

**Rent Stabilization Commission
City of West Hollywood
Thursday, March 24, 2016 @ 7:00 PM
West Hollywood Park Public Meeting Room – Council Chambers
625 North San Vicente Boulevard**

Minutes

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Sanes called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Commissioner Bergstein led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: Commission Secretary Tom Trevor took roll call.

PRESENT:

Chair Gail Sanes, Vice Chair Richard Maggio, Commissioner Stephanie Harker, Commissioner Rob Bergstein, Commissioner Alexander Gurfinkel, and Commissioner Josh Kurpies.

ABSENT: Commissioner David Gregoire.

STAFF PRESENT:

Rent Stabilization and Housing Manager Peter Noonan, and Commission Secretary Tom Trevor.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

A motion was made by Commissioner Bergstein to approve the agenda for the March 24, 2016 meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gurfinkel. The motion was approved (6-0-0).

Commissioner Maggio requested that tonight's meeting be adjourned in memory of the victims of the Brussels terror attacks.

Chair Sanes requested that tonight's meeting be adjourned in memory of the victims of the Turkey terror attack.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Vice Chair Maggio to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2016 meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Harker. The motion was approved (5-0-1) with Commissioner Bergstein abstaining.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bergstein to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2015 meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Maggio. The motion was approved (6-0-0).

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Dan Harrington-Tyrell of West Hollywood spoke regarding his recent attendance at the West Hollywood Disability Advisory Board and for the need to support social service agencies located within the City.

DIRECTOR'S/MANAGER'S REPORT:

Rent Stabilization and Housing Manager Peter Noonan reviewed the items on the evening's agenda. He also announced upcoming topics to be discussed at future meetings.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Harker spoke about some of the upcoming Rent Stabilization Building Blocks seminars. She encouraged people to attend the April 5 Tenant's 101 seminar that will be held in Russian, and the April 19 Water Conservation seminar.

Vice Chair Maggio asked staff about the recent updates to the Rent Stabilization Ordinance.

Commissioner Kurpies spoke regarding his and Chair Sanes' attendance at the March 8, 2016 Human Services Commission meeting where they participated in a group discussion regarding the Social Services RFP (Request for Proposal) process. Commissioner Harker asked about the contract with PATH (People Assisting the Homeless), which will be expiring during the upcoming year. Commissioner Kurpies spoke about an article that he read in the Santa Monica Mirror regarding a tenant's suit against a landlord regarding privacy rights.

Commissioner Kurpies also commented about the cancellation of the March 10 Rent Stabilization Commission meeting. He requested that a discussion be agendized regarding a formal process for meeting cancellations.

Vice Chair Maggio reviewed the Managers Look Ahead and asked if more items could be added to upcoming meetings.

At this time Commissioner Kurpies made a motion to agendize further discussion on the process for cancelling a meeting and for adding Commission priority discussions to a meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Maggio. The motion was approved (6-0-0).

Commissioner Gurfinkel made a motion directing staff to agendize a presentation for the Commission on the topic of multi-language public outreach. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bergstein. The motion was passed (6-0-0).

Commissioner Bergstein requested clarification on the City's Social Media Policy and whether or not staff could be directed by Commission members to respond to social media postings. Commissioner Harker recommended that Commissioners should direct community members to contact City Hall, but she did not support directing staff to respond on social media at the request of a Commissioner. Rent Stabilization and Housing Manager Peter Noonan agreed to review City policy and respond at a later date.

Commissioner Bergstein requested that staff agendize a discussion of converting rent stabilized units to non-smoking upon turn over.

Commissioner Bergstein commented on an article he read in the Los Angeles Times regarding a for profit company that takes advantage of minor clerical errors in an effort to delay landlord's just cause evictions.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- Apartment Unit Transfers:

Rent Stabilization and Housing Manager Peter Noonan gave a presentation on the Commission's prior June 11, 2015 discussion on possible incentives the City could offer to encourage voluntary participation on the part of landlords in unit transfers. This included summarizing the Commission's prior suggestions on possible options to incentivize unit transfers. Manager Noonan then requested feedback from the Commission and additional suggestions for staff to explore.

Vice Chair Maggio asked if a long term tenant would lose their occupancy "seniority" if they were to transfer units and, if not, would they be negatively affected in the event that an Ellis eviction was initiated.

Commissioner Harker commented on the possibility that both units could be raised to market rate in the event of a unit transfer.

Commissioner Gurfinkel asked for clarification on what type of comments staff is seeking from the Commission.

Commissioner Gurfinkel then suggested that creative new incentives should be introduced to encourage landlords to participate.

Commissioner Kurpies asked about whether there should be concern about the definition of "tenant" or "vacancy". He expressed concern about offering elaborate incentives to landlords.

Commissioner Harker suggested that wording in the proposed incentives regarding tenants who become mobility challenged not focus on whether the tenant is a senior but include anyone who is mobility impaired.

Commissioner Bergstein spoke about how an apartment building is an important investment and it should be expected that a property owner would want to see a return on this investment. He expressed his concerns that a City policy regarding unit transfers would not be a viable policy and he stated that were the City to hire a consultant to review a unit transfer policy that it would not be money well spent. He encouraged staff to reach out to AAGLA (Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles) and bring them into this conversation. He also suggested a possible property tax incentive.

Commissioner Gurfinkel suggested incentives that assist tenants work with their landlords in an equitable manner to enable unit transfers to take place.

Chair Sanes made a motion to direct staff to compile the Commissions comments, analyze the potential costs and benefits, reach out to the community and then return to the Commission with a report. Commissioner Gurfinkel seconded the motion.

- Designation of Commission Liaisons:

The Commission designated the following liaisons to the following boards and commissions:

Business License Commission – Richard Maggio
Historic Preservation Commission – Stephanie Harker
Human Services Commission – Rob Bergstein
Planning – Rob Bergstein
Public Safety – Richard Maggio
Senior Advisory Board – Richard Maggio
Russian Advisory Board – Alexander Gurfinkel
Disability Advisory Board – Stephanie Harker

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Bergstein commented on how high commercial/office rents can cause financial hardship for nonprofit agencies and said he had suggested to Council that the lot at Crescent Heights and Santa Monica could be utilized to house nonprofit agencies at subsidized commercial/office rents.

Commissioner Harker asked staff if the MovieTown inclusionary housing units were for seniors only and she asked if seniors who had been Ellised would have priority.

STAFF COMMENTS:

Rent Stabilization and Housing Manager Peter Noonan provided each Commissioner with Rent Stabilization and Housing Information Coordinator business cards and encouraged them to provide a card when members of the public approached them with rent stabilization or housing questions.


ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 p.m. in memory of the victims of the terror attacks in Brussels and Turkey. The next regular meeting of the Rent Stabilization Commission will be held on April 14, 2016 in the West Hollywood Park Public Meeting Room – Council Chambers.

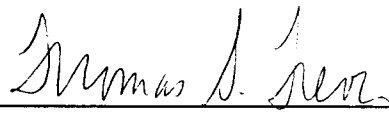
These minutes were submitted by Laura Schoonover, Commission Secretary and approved by a motion of the Rent Stabilization Commission on this 14th day of April, 2016.

A copy of the audio recording of this meeting can be obtained from the City Clerk's office upon request.
(Disclaimer: Staff records the meetings for the sole purpose of composing the official meeting minutes; therefore the recordings are not of commercial quality.)

ATTEST:



Richard Maggio, Acting Chair



Commission Secretary