



City of Portland

Remote Rental Housing Advisory Committee

Co-Chairs: Meredith Cook, Tenant Representative and Regan Sweeney, Landlord Representative

ZOOM MEETING INSTRUCTIONS:

The Rental Housing Advisory Committee will hold a remote meeting on Thursday, May 14, 2020 at 5:30 pm. This meeting will take place remotely using Zoom.

Virtual meetings are allowed using emergency legislation approved by LD 2167; 1 M.R.S. §403-A, that authorizes cities and towns to conduct meetings online.

Allow your computer to install the free Zoom app to get the best meeting experience. If you are not able to attend live, a recording will be uploaded to portlandmaine.gov/livestream the next day.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88243597102>

For public comment, you will need to use the “raise your hand” feature. To raise your hand via the telephone, please hit *9. You will be unmuted by the host when it is time for public comment.

To join via Telephone dial:

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Webinar ID: 882 4359 7102

1. Review and Approval of the Minutes of the April 23, 2020 meeting.
 - a. Draft Minutes from April 23, 2020 Meeting
2. Update on Housing Committee's May 13 meeting, including its consideration of RHAC's recommendations on rental housing application fees.
3. Discussion of efforts to educate landlords and tenants on changes to rental housing laws and regulations during COVID-19 pandemic
4. Public Comment - Members of the public will be given an opportunity to address the Committee. Any person wishing to address the Committee shall give their name and address, and, if applicable, organization represented, and restrict comments to three (3) minutes.

- a. *NOTE: The Rental Housing Advisory Committee is not a grievance committee or complaint forum for landlord-tenant issues or dispute resolution. The duties of the Committee are (1) To Provide the Housing Committee with recommendations or proposals for improvements, modifications, or changes regarding landlord and tenant policy issues; and (2) Identify educational opportunities, seminars, and materials that would be useful to landlords and tenants.*

5. Other Business.
6. Next Meeting Date: TBD
7. Adjournment

Rental Housing Advisory Committee

Minutes of Remote Meeting on April 23, 2020

A meeting of the Portland Rental Housing Advisory Committee (RHAC) was held remotely via a Zoom webinar on Thursday, April 23, 2020 at 5:30 P.M. Committee members present at the meeting included Meredith Cook, Regan Sweeney, Aaron Berger, Amy Carole, Nora Graves, Wendy Harmon, Travis Heynen, Katherine McGovern, and Crow Norlander. City staff present included Mary Davis of the Housing and Community Development Division.

Item 1: Review and approval of the Minutes of previous meeting held on February 24, 2020

Motion by Aaron, seconded by Nora to approve the minutes from the February 24, 2020 meeting. Motion approved 9-0.

Item 2: Discussion of short-term rental housing proposals by Councilor Cook and recommendation to the Housing Committee/City Council regarding same.

Regan Sweeney introduced Councilor Cook's Affordable Rental Housing Incentive Program proposals. The first proposal is to incentivize landlords to move STRs into the LTR market by returning any STR registration fees paid for the unit for the year 2020 and a waiver of long term rental registration fees for the year 2020 for new long term rental registration so long as that person a) relinquishes their short term rental registration for that unit; b) registers the unit as a long term rental (or has an existing long term rental registration for that unit); and c) provides evidence to the Housing Safety Office that the person has entered into a lease agreement for the unit of at least one year's duration. The second proposal adopts a temporary Landlord Housing Conversion Incentive pursuant to which any person who holds a short term rental registration for a short term rental unit pursuant to Sec. 6-150 et seq., is entitled to a one-time payment of \$1,000.00 so long as that person a) relinquishes their short term rental registration for that unit; b) registers the unit as a long term rental (or has an existing long term rental registration for that unit); and c) provides evidence to the Housing and Community Development Division that the person has entered into an agreement to lease the unit to an individual(s) for a minimum of 1 year, and that individual will be receiving either Section 8 funds or General Assistance funds for the unit. The \$1,000 payment shall be paid out of the Housing

Trust. The Council would amend the Housing Trust Fund Ordinance to allow this proposed program.

Wendy Harmon asked if this proposal would include the STR on Peaks Island. Per Katie, during the previous evening's Housing Committee meeting, Councilor Cook noted many of the STRs on Peaks Island are not winterized and thus would not be eligible for year-round leasing.

Aaron Berger asked for clarification regarding whether the two proposals were an either or proposal, and how removing the status of a unit from the STR registration list would affect future STR listings. Per Committee discussion, the proposals are viewed as separate proposal that could both be adopted or not. If a unit were removed from the STR registration list for 2020, then the unit would not lose its spot for 2021.

Meredith Cook inquired into whether or not other rental assistance programs would be accepted. Per Katie McGovern, there was not a discussion of accepting other rental assistance programs during the Housing Committee's meeting. Per Meredith, she would recommend Councilor Cook's proposal included other rental assistance programs. Katie also expressed the thought that the lease does not allowed no cause eviction.

Regan noted the following concerns; incentivizing conversions is not necessary, as STR in Portland are currently not allowed to operate; LTR owners are penalized by paying the LTR registration fee that is proposed to be waived for STR conversions; potential for fraud; enforcement and oversight would be with City departments that are already overburdened; potential for Housing Trust funds to be sent to out of state STR owners. The Committee discussed these concerns. Travis Heynen thinks we should do whatever we can do to increase supply so feels the incentive is good first step. Wendy proposed adding language that would not allow the owner to STR the unit for the remainder of 2020 and 2021. Aaron supports Wendy's proposal. The Committee inquired into the balance of the Housing Trust fund. Mary Davis provided balance information as well as anticipated funding requests against that balance and the Council's option to withdrawal funds below the staff recommended \$500,000 floor. The Committee suggested drafting a memo of modifications and concerns that merit further discussion. Items to be included in the memo are: ensure the lease agreement does not include a no-cause eviction provision; encourage adding other subsidy programs besides GA and Section 8; add language that prohibits the conversion of a STR from a LTR to a STR until at least the year 2022; and add language to cap the amount of money that is distributed from the Housing Trust fund to pay for the \$1,000 incentive. Regan asked Committees members to submit their ideas for the memo. The consensus supports the second proposal over the first proposal with the addition of the modifications and concerns.

Item 3: Discussion of proposals and ideas to assist rental housing community during COVID-19 pandemic and possible recommendations to the Housing Committee and/or City Council

Katie shared with the Committee that Pine Tree Legal is open and taking calls. They are seeing an increase in concerns with threatened legal evictions. These tend to be in relationships that are similar to motel/hotel situations (such as renting a room in a single-family home or renting a room in a rooming house). Pine Tree Legal is fielding more calls regarding the eviction process while the courts are closed. And they are seeing confusion concerning writs of possession that were issued prior to the courts closing. They are also receiving more phone calls regarding tenants unable to pay their rent. There is an expectation there will be a large number of evictions proceedings once the courts open.

Katie asked the Committee if they would like to ask the Housing Committee to issue a temporary moratorium on rent increases.

Crow Norlander suggested adding it to list of items to encourage the Housing Committee to consider.

Katie noted PTLA has COVID related updates on website.

Item 4: Public Comment

No attendees; no public comment

Item 5: Other Business

Decide to move May meeting to the 14th instead of 18th.

With no other business on the agenda, Meredith moved and Aaron seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 6:49 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Victoria Volent