



City of Portland Remote Rental Housing Advisory Committee

Monday, December 27, 2021

1. ZOOM MEETING INSTRUCTIONS

- a. The Rental Housing Advisory Committee will hold a remote meeting on Monday, December 27, 2021 at 5:30 pm. This meeting will take place using Zoom. Virtual meetings are allowed using emergency legislation approved by LD 2167: 1 M.R.S. Section 403A, that authorizes cities and towns to conduct meetings online.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85297346807>

To join via telephone or iPhone dial:

+1 312-626-6799

Meeting ID: 852 9734 6807

2. Review and Approval of the Minutes of the October 25, 2021 meeting

- a. Minutes, October 25, 2021

Review, revise, and potentially approve recommendations to Housing & Economic Development Committee on City's Tenant & Landlord Resources page:
<https://www.portlandmaine.gov/2604/Tenant-Landlord-Resources>.

- a. City Website Tenant and Landlord Resources Page
- ### 4. Update on Rent Board activities and ordinances
- ### 5. Discussion of inviting staff from Permitting and Inspections to attend future meeting
- ### 6. Public Comment
- a. 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.

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 and Economic Development Committee with recommendations or proposals for improvements, modifications, or changes regarding landlord and tenant policy issues; and (2) to identify educational opportunities, seminars, and materials that would be useful to landlords and tenants.

7. Other Business

**Rental Housing Advisory Committee
Minutes of Remote Meeting held on October 25, 2021**

Committee attendance: Meredith Cook, Nora Graves, Wendy Harmon, Jeremy Lock, Chris Marot, Crow Norlander, and Regan Sweeney.

Staff attendance: Mary Davis and Victoria Volent

Item 1: Review and Approval of the Minutes of the September 27, 2021 Meeting

On motion made by Meredith Cook, seconded by Nora Graves, the Committee voted (7-0) to accept the minutes as published.

Item 2: Review, revise, and potentially approve recommendation to HEDC on City's Tenant & Landlord Resources page. <https://www.portlandmaine.gov/2604/Tenant-Landlord-Resources>

The Committee held a discussion regarding information of interest to tenants and landlords found within the City's website. Concerns were raised that some material is not up to date or is not included on the website. Also, information is difficult to find, and using the Search feature on the Home page is not helpful. Introducing a Quick link or key words to quickly navigate between department web pages (Health and Human Services, Permitting and Inspections, and Housing and Community Development) was discussed as well as having one page containing all things housing.

The Committee did express support for the clarity of information regarding Housing Safety and Rent Control presented by Permitting & Inspections, and the COVID resource page.

Regan Sweeney will provide and circulate a draft memo prior to the next meeting.

Item 3: Discussion of recommendation to HEDC regarding publication of Rent Board and Housing Safety decisions.

The Committee held a discussion regarding the request to have the City publish the decisions of the Rent Board and Housing Safety Department. Tenant and landlords may also find it beneficial to know the outcome of past discussions and decisions to establish precedents to help move meetings along, and aid in reducing the number of applications involving similar disputes.

Mary Davis indicated staff could internally assist with this request. Mary asked the Committee to provide specific recommendation for change. Chris Marot volunteered to draft a memo of recommendation. Committee members were directed to send ideas and thoughts to Chris.

Item 4: Discussion of issues surrounding Short Term Rentals, listings, and enforcement

Regan Sweeny began the discussion by noting he was approached by a citizen inquiring into how the Short Term Rental Ordinance is enforced. The Committee observed they would like to learn more about compliance, enforcement, penalties, collection of fines, and how to confirm a unit is listed short term as opposed to long term. Mary Davis indicated staff from Permitting and Inspections could provide an information session for the Committee.

The Committee also stressed the need to provide citizens with easily accessible information regarding their earlier expressed concerns. Staff noted public records can be searched through the Citizen Self Service portal. The Committee supports providing aggregate data regarding the amount of fines collected by the City during enforcement, and providing a link and/or reminders on the short-term rental registration page that the CSS portal is a means to conduct property searches. Mary Davis asked the Committee to prepare a list of questions/concerns/comments addressed to the Housing and Community Development Department for an interdepartmental response.

Item 5: Update on Rent Board activities and ordinances

Regan Sweeney noted this topic was touched upon earlier in the meeting. Committee members briefly discussed a decision regarding renovations and rent increases conducted during a recent meeting of the Rent Board.

Item 6: Public Comment

The meeting was opened to public comment, seeing no member of the public present, the public comment period was closed.

Item 7: Other Business

The Committee discussed and agreed to move their next meeting to Tuesday, November 23.

Motion by Meredith Cook to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Chris Marot and passed unanimously (7-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 6:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Victoria Volent

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Rental Housing Advisory Committee

TO: Housing and Economic Development Committee / Staff

DATE: 12/15/2021

SUBJECT: City Website “Tenant & Landlord Resources” Page
<https://www.portlandmaine.gov/2604/Tenant-Landlord-Resources>

As part of the RHAC’s charge to “identify educational opportunities,” and provide recommendations regarding “proposals for improvements, modifications, or changes regarding landlord and tenant policy issues,” the RHAC recommends that City staff update its webpage entitled “Tenant & Landlord Resources,” with the URL referenced above.

Though the page is titled simply “Tenant & Landlord Resources,” in its current form, the page is listed under Health & Human Services, “COVID-19 Information,” and is comprised solely of information related to relief available and policy changes made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The vast majority of the information available on the site is very outdated, to the point where most of the programs and relief referenced are no longer available.

This page is the top Google result when searching for “Portland Maine landlord tenant information,” and it is a City government site, so it’s important that the information provided is both relevant and up to date. To that end, the RHAC recommends the following changes:

1. Update Page with Currently-Available COVID-19 Programs and Relief

To the extent the City intends to keep a website providing information about the various programs, changes, and relief available specific to the COVID-19 pandemic, then this page should be updated to serve in that capacity. It should be renamed, and the back-end coding changed to reflect that it is a page specific to COVID-19-related measures, and not a site containing information about Portland’s landlord/tenant laws and issues, generally. That should be a separate page/site, more appropriately under Housing and Economic Development rather than Health and Human Services.

2. Create a New Page with Landlord-Tenant Information

The RHAC recommends that the City create a webpage dedicated to Landlord/Tenant Information, generally, that contains links to relevant City Code provisions, Rent Board page, RHAC page, rental property registration, Housing Safety, etc. The RHAC did not develop an exhaustive list of all things that should be included on the page, but in addition to links to the

other various City sites regarding landlord-tenant matters, the RHAC recommends that the City publish the following on its website:

a. *Rent Board Decisions*

As the Rent Board continues to hear and decide cases before it, the City should publish those decisions publicly on its website, so that they are readily available to the community.

b. *Information on Violations*

To the extent landlords have been fined, registrations revoked, or other penalties imposed for violating the City's landlord-tenant ordinances, it hasn't been well-publicized, and there is a perception among the rental community that enforcement simply isn't happening. Just as with the Rent Board's decisions, the City should be publishing these as well, so that the community is apprised of what's happening.