



City of Portland Remote Rental Housing Advisory Committee

March 24, 2022

1. ZOOM MEETING INSTRUCTIONS

- a. The Rental Housing Advisory Committee will hold a remote meeting on **Thursday**, March 24, 2022 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. Section 403A, that authorizes cities and towns to conduct meetings online.

Allow your computer to install the free Zoom app . 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://portlandmaine-gov.zoom.us/j/85805391584>

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: 1-312-626-6799

Webinar ID: 858 0539 1584

2. Review and Approval of the Minutes of the March 3, 2022 meeting
 - a. Draft March 3, 2022 minutes
3. Discussion and Q & A with Jessica Hanscombe (Director of Permitting and Inspections) and Zachary Lenhart (Licensing & Housing Safety Manager)
 - a. Memos and Questions
4. Development of Committee work plan and ideas for 2022
 - a. Ideas for Work Plan for RHAC 2022
5. 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 minutes.
6. Other Business

**Rental Housing Advisory Committee
Minutes of Remote Meeting held on March 3, 2022**

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

Staff attendance: Mary Davis and Victoria Volent

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

On motion made by William Sedlack, seconded by Nora Graves, the Committee voted (7-0) (Jeremy Lock abstained) to accept the minutes.

Item 2: Discussion and Scheduling of Rental Housing Authority Committee meetings for 2022

The Committee held a discussion and determined the majority of members are available to meet on the 4th Thursday of the month.

On motion made by Regan Sweeney, seconded by Christopher Marot, the Committee voted (8-0) to hold meetings of the Rental Housing Advisory Committee on the fourth Thursday of the month.

Item 3: Discussion of Maine's new law requiring fuel gas leak detectors in multi-family units

Regan Sweeney introduced this item. The State of Maine Department of Public Safety announced effective January 1, 2022, building owners shall install at least one fuel gas detector in every room containing an appliance fueled by propane, natural gas, or any liquefied petroleum gas in each unit of any multifamily building. The Committee would like to assist with educating landlords and tenants in regards to the new law and suggested including this notice on the landlord-tenant webpage. Committee members have questions regarding efforts already taken or underway by the Housing Safety Department regarding landlord/tenant notification and will include their questions during the upcoming RHAC meeting to be attended by Housing Safety.

Item 4: Discussion of inviting staff from Permitting and Inspections to attend future meeting

Within the packet of material for the meeting is a memo (*Rental Housing Advisory Committee's Why and Ideas for Moving Forward*) of ideas to help create positive change in the community. The Committee also discussed preparing additional questions for the Housing and Safety

Department during the upcoming RHAC meeting to be attended by Housing Safety. Ideas include creating a website notice of city ordinances for landlords and tenants, and working with the zoning department to help disseminate information via virtual workshops. Members would like to know what are the frequently asked questions of Housing Safety; what challenges are there to enforcing the short-term rental code; what are the typical code issues with STRs; how does the complaint process work; what challenges are associated with permitting accessory dwelling units; how many ADU applications have been received; how many ADU permits have been issued; how does the ADU permitting process work; what are the common reasons to deny an ADU; how can the RHAC best serve the Housing Safety Department? Nora Graves will share a list of questions she has prepared to be forwarded by staff to the Permitting and Inspections Department in preparation for their upcoming meeting.

Item 5: Development of Committee Work Plan and other ideas

The Committee discussed their charge and methods to educate tenants and landlords noting the city website could be clearer with some reformatting.

Members were asked to bring their ideas to the next meeting at which time (and after hearing back from the Housing Safety Department) the Committee may have a better focus on Work Plan priorities.

Item 6: Public Comment

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

Item 7: Other Business

The next meeting is to be scheduled for Thursday, March 24.

On a motion made by Meredith Cook, seconded by Regan Sweeney, the Committee voted unanimously (7-0) to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Victoria Volent

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Rental Housing Advisory Committee

TO: Jessica Hanscombe, Permitting & Inspections; and
Zachary Lenhart, Licensing & Housing Safety

DATE: March 21, 2022

SUBJECT: Discussion / Q&A with RHAC at 3/24/22 Meeting

The Rental Housing Advisory Committee (“RHAC”) appreciates your willingness to attend our March 23 meeting. To make that meeting as productive as possible, and to minimize the possibility of questions you didn’t expect, the following is a list of some things that have come up in our discussions regarding Housing Safety, Inspections and the like.

- The explosive gas leak detector requirement ([25 M.R.S. § 2469](#)), and any efforts by the City to publicize or distribute notice to landlords and tenants, and/or any plans to include these in future safety inspections.
- Rent Board:
 - The process for, and Housing Safety’s involvement in, drafting the various forms and documents used by the Rent Board.
 - Ways of streamlining paperwork drafting / submission process.
 - Any plans for publicizing or otherwise making Rent Board decisions publicly available.
- What are Housing Safety and Inspections’ biggest obstacles in obtaining compliance with various L/T laws and regulations? Is there anything the RHAC can recommend that could help?
- What are Housing Safety’s biggest issues or problems with short-term rentals (STRs) like Airbnb, etc.? How has enforcement of the restrictions on and registration of STRs been going? Is there anything the RHAC can do to help?
- What’s the usual lifecycle of a building or renovation permitting request, from first filing to approval? Are there ways of streamlining that process for expediency? Can the RHAC help?
- What are the most common reasons building or renovation permits get denied? Are these things that are usually corrected, and/or followed up on?
- What is being done in terms of educational materials, programs, website announcements, etc. explaining how the permitting process works, and how to navigate it?

Questions

Topic: Short-term Rentals

How are owners/landlords notified of violations?

How does the City verify owner status (residency?)

How are violations followed up for verification of correction/ What is the approximate time frame?

What consequences are there for non-compliance?

When a complaint is made, what steps are followed to investigate, mitigate and resolve?

Does the complainant get notified of the above steps

Topic: Rent Board

Where are Rent Board decisions posted? (MaineRentersUnited.org).

Topic: Accessory Dwelling Units

Committee members have heard the application is difficult to complete

Topic: Information dissemination

Committee members would like a webpage dedicated to Landlord-Tenant information that contains links to; relevant City Code provisions; Rent Board page; RHAC page; Rental Property Registration page; Housing Safety page; STR;

Ideas for Work Plan for RHAC 2022

Most of the work plan that the committee put together for 2021 still applies and is valid for 2022 with some tweaking for the ever changing Covid rules. However, here are some ideas that could be added to the 2022 work plan if the committee agrees:

- With the influx of many asylum seekers to the Portland area and their current housing situation in area hotels, a recommendation can be made that the City establish a link for landlords who can provide housing for these asylum seekers and include the support services they will need to establish themselves in the community
- Recommend the City look at procedures and regulations on past due rents, property taxes and mortgage payments as well as repairs that were put off during the Covid crisis and assist with allowing tenants to remain in their homes and landlords to keep their properties
- Recommend that no late fees or penalties be assessed to tenants or owners affected by Covid and have documentation of such.
- Recommend the city work with owners on payments of property taxes and extend the deadlines for collection of total payments with no penalties or initiate a payment plan in 6 month increments.
- Recommend no negative credit reporting for either tenants or owners who had Covid related and verified issues with non-payment or partial payments leaving a balance.
- Recommend the HEDC upon review of the RHAC 2022 work plan provide feedback and communicate throughout the year with the committee on items they want to prioritize.

Some of the above items may cause redundancy with either or both the Rent Board or the HEDC but the lack of two way communication at this point makes it difficult to resolve.

/ncg
1-25-22