

MINUTES

Citizens Advisory Council  
for Housing Matters

April 5, 1979  
12 p.m. DHR

Absent: Arnold, Guertin, Hanks, Reeves, Sharpe, Stafford  
Substitutes: Ed Dale for R. Podolsky  
Guests: Jim Benjamin, Relocation Hearing Officer, Dept. Economic  
Development; Val Merriman, Fair Housing Officer, HHRC;  
John Potkay, State Association of Housing Code Enforcement  
Officials; Bob Kor, Neighborhood Legal Services;

The meeting convened at 12:15 p.m.

The Minutes of the March 1, meeting were approved as presented.

A. Housing Court Update - Augur

The Mayor of New Britain wrote to Judge Spada, expressing concern over the problem of replacing the New Britain Court's Housing Specialist. Spada replied that for the present he will assign one of the two remaining Housing Specialist to the New Britain Court on a twice weekly basis. He may be able to further strengthen that office with a summer worker.

May 16 marks the beginning of Judge Spada's vacation. Another Judge has been assigned to the Session during his absence. Augur noted that she had recently expressed in a memo to Councilmembers concern about the need for the Judicial Selection Subcommittee to reconvene. Councilmembers interested in serving are asked to contact her.

Paul Brown, Coordinator of Ct. Clerks for the Judicial District, sent all the GA Clerks in the District a letter on 1/5/79, instructing them to assist pro se's in filing complaints with the Housing Session.

Judge Spada has submitted to the Legislature another proposed bill, clarifying that summary process cases can be brought to the Court. pro se

The issue of when to involve a Housing Specialist in a complaint has been resolved by the Court by having the Prosecutor screen all cases and decide whether and when to involve a Specialist. The Court advised Augur that it would like Specialists to be involved from the very beginning.

John Potkay stated that unnecessary use of the Specialists' limited time was occurring because they were making site visits on cases where local officials had already compiled documentation.

B. Correspondence Received - Augur

Augur reported receipt of a number of letters praising Judge Spada and the Housing Session.

C. Other Issues

(a) Consumer Cases - Augur advised that the MA Housing Court had





just been denied jurisdiction on consumer housing complaints. She and Dale advised that the enabling CT statute is unclear with regard to the Housing Session's jurisdiction in this area. Several Councilmembers agreed that the Council should take a position now on this issue, as it had with commercial tort and summary process cases.

A MOTION (Greenblatt-Cugno) was VOTED (5-3) to decide at this meeting whether to support the inclusion of consumer cases in the Court's jurisdiction.

Three motions were withdrawn due to failure to agree on wording.

A MOTION (Coll-Greenblatt) that the CAC not publicize further the role of the Court in handling consumer problems in the initial period, but attempt to serve as a watchdog on the State Department of Consumer Protection regarding such problems was DEFEATED on a 4-4 vote.

(b) Housing-Related Legislation - Augur requested direction from the Council regarding whether she should support housing-related bills unless negative comments were received from Councilmembers. It was the consensus of the Council that she not attempt to represent the Council on all such bills this session.

(c) Specific Legislation - The strengths and weaknesses of Bill 1505 were discussed.

A MOTION (Maurer-DeNigris) was unanimously VOTED to express CAC support of Bill 1505 to create a Department of Housing, with suggestions for strong consumer emphasis and an independent consumer advocate.

Councilmembers were asked to write or appear on 4/11/79 to support Judge Spada's CAC endorsed bills numbered 1637, 1650, 1652, and 7957.

#### D. Subcommittee Reports

(a) Publicity and Community Education - Augur advised that the Prosecutor had worked out proposed procedures with the SCHRO on how to handle discrimination complaints. A seminar on the proposed procedures is scheduled for Thursday 5/3/79. Councilmembers and local Fair Housing Officers will be asked to comment.

Maurer reminded the Council that they are responsible for submitting a list of contact agencies in their town. Code enforcement data is needed also. The Subcommittee is working on a major Press Release, encouraging the public to use the Court, especially for code violation cases.

Femia reported for Hanks on the informational brochure. Copies were distributed of the English and Spanish versions.

(b) Forms Revision Subcommittee - Augur advised that Bob Kor, who had to leave early, had been prepared to review the copies of simplified forms he and other committeemembers have drafted.



E. Guest Speaker - Jim Benjamin reported that CT's Uniform Relocation Act, which he helped draft, is more stringent than that of the federal government, which is limited to households displaced by acquisition of land for urban renewal. CT statute covers code enforcement and violations, but the State provides no money for either, and the towns are too fiscally pressed to comply with the statute without State aid. Councilmember Cugno advised that the statute permits payment to an individual household of up to \$5,000, so towns are understandably reluctant to condemn an entire building and relocate all the tenants. This is the reason most towns placard individual apartment units as they are vacated.

Augur noted that Senator Cloud is sponsoring Bill 711 to establish a state displacement policy. Bill 7014 calls for full state reimbursement for relocation expenses associated with housing code enforcement, but no appropriation is included.

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Carol A. Femia*  
 Carol A. Femia, M.S.W.  
 Recording Secretary

CAF:tac

