



# THE CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR HOUSING MATTERS

Reply to: 20 N. Main St., Suite 210  
South Norwalk, Connecticut 06854  
(203) 238-2800

September 12, 1985

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 10, 1985

Members present: Diana Crouse, Aura Diaz, Elaine DiNigris, Melanee Harris, Robert Kor, Douglas Mintz, Edward Murtha, Raphael Podolsky, Kevin Tierney, Patricia Wallace, Joseph Wincze.

Others present: Hon. Jerrold Barnett, David Pels.

(1) Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 4:15 p.m. on September 10, 1985, at the State Police Academy in Meriden. Douglas Mintz, chairperson, presided.

(2) Judge Barnett: Judge Jerrold Barnett, the judge of the New Haven-Waterbury Housing Court, offered the following proposals to the Council:

(a) Waterbury should be separated from the New Haven Housing Court, perhaps being combined with Danbury. He feels that the Waterbury caseload cannot adequately be handled on a one day per week basis. He also suggested that a housing court be created for the Norwich-New London area.

(b) Resources should be more generally available. For example, he recommended that an index of cases should be prepared by the Judicial Department, perhaps using law students. He also recommended that appropriate case reporting services be available.

(c) Improvements should be made in the New Haven courtroom and judge's chambers, such as adequate air conditioning and heating.

(d) C.G.S. 7-148 should be amended to clarify the authority of municipalities to impose a 30-day jail sentence for housing code violations.

(e) The housing session should be made a full-fledged "division" of the Superior Court, with an administrative judge having statewide administrative authority over all housing courts.

(f) He feels that prosecution by local prosecutors is preferable to the centralized prosecution established by P.A. 84-445 because he believes that local prosecutors are more likely to get quick action by police departments in serving warrants.

Except for Item (c), all of Judge Barnett's recommendations were referred to the Executive Committee. Item (c) was referred to the New Haven-Waterbury Committee. Robert Kor was assigned to obtain more detailed information about the Housing Division in relation to Item (e).

(3) Approval of minutes: The minutes of the December 6, 1984, meeting were approved unanimously.

(4) Treasurer's report: Raphael Podolsky reported that the present balance of the Council is \$1,309.99, including \$350.00 received from the CIGNA Foundation. The Fairfield County Cooperative Foundation has given the Council permission to use the unexpended portion of its 1984-85 grant during the 1985-86 year as well. The Council's finances are:

<u>Revenue</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>
CIGNA		\$ 350.00	\$ 350.00
Fairfield Co. Coop. Fndtn.		1,200.00	0.00
Interest		41.03	46.63
TOTAL		<u>\$1,591.03</u>	<u>\$ 396.63</u>
<u>Expenditures</u>			
Mailings			
Postage		\$ 131.56	\$ 40.07
Duplication		134.98	21.09
Receptions		125.31	155.74
Reports		286.00	0.00
TOTAL		<u>\$ 677.85</u>	<u>\$ 216.90</u>
Balance as of....	12/31/83	12/31/84	7/31/85
	\$ 131.38	\$1,044.56	\$1,224.29

(5) Housing court brochures: Joseph Wincze requested authority to print additional copies of a revised brochure on the Bridgeport-Norwalk Housing Court. The estimated cost is \$430 for 1,000 copies and \$680 for 2,000 copies. Pitney-Bowes was unwilling to print the report without charge. The matter was tabled to the next meeting. In the interim, the following is to occur:

- (a) The Executive Committee is to review the text and cost of the brochure.
- (b) The Hartford-New Britain and the New Haven-Waterbury Committees are to identify and draft changes in the brochure necessary for use in their respective districts.
- (c) Local funding is to be explored in each of the three districts. Persons in charge of making contacts are:
  - (i) Bridgeport-Norwalk: Diana Crouse
  - (ii) New Haven-Waterbury: Pat Wallace
  - (iii) Hartford-New Britain: David Pels.
- (d) Douglas Mintz will contact the Commission on Legal Publications and/or the Judicial Department about printing the brochure at state expense.

(6) Legislative package: Raphael Podolsky reported on the fate of the Council's legislative proposals during the 1985 legislative session. The following Council recommendations were adopted by the General Assembly:

- (a) The Payment into Court Act was made permanent and extended to all parts of the state, effective July 1, 1985 (P.A. 85-378).
- (b) The maximum claim which can be heard in the small claims session of the housing court was increased from \$1,000 to \$1,500, effective October 1, 1985 (P.A. 85-256).
- (c) Small claims sessions will be allowed to hear cases against landlords whose buildings are in Connecticut but who live out of state, effective October 1, 1985 (P.A. 85-256).

The following Council recommendations were not adopted:

- (a) Hiring extra housing specialists to service the non-housing court districts;
- (b) Designating G.A. clerks in the non-housing court districts as housing clerks to the extent that they process housing cases.
- (c) Requiring that eviction papers be mailed to the tenant, as well as left at the apartment.

Patricia Wallace suggested that, if the Council submits legislative recommendations in 1986, the Council's three local committees should each meet with their respective local legislators to discuss its recommendations.

(7) Prosecution: Douglas Mintz reported that John Kelly has replaced Austin McGuigan as Chief State's Attorney. A meeting between him and the Council's Executive Committee is being scheduled to discuss the implementation of P.A. 84-445. Judge Barnett suggested that, when prosecuting a landlord, prosecutors be encouraged to prosecute not only under local codes but also for violations of state codes and laws.

(8) Caseload data: Patricia Wallace was asked to obtain regular data on housing court dockets and caseloads.

(9) Maloney Committee: Douglas Mintz reported that the Executive Committee met with Chief Court Administrator Aaron Ment over the summer to discuss the Council's 1985 biennial report. Judge Ment responded by setting up a committee, of which former Hartford-New Britain Housing Court judge John Maloney is the chairperson, to review the Council's recommendations. The committee has so far held one meeting.

(10) Spanish forms: Aura Diaz agreed to take responsibility for identifying any housing court forms or materials in need of translation and arranging for them to be translated into Spanish. Forms already drafted by the Council appear in Appendix D of its 1985 report.

(11) Housing court personnel: Reports were given on the appointment of new clerks in Hartford (Victor Feigenbaum), Bridgeport (John Purcell), and Norwalk (Richard Preston) and a new housing specialist in Hartford (Yolanda Rivera). A new judge (Thomas Gerety) has been appointed in Bridgeport. The Bridgeport-Norwalk Committee was requested to look into continuing concerns about the housing court in that district.

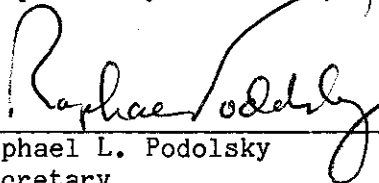
(12) Housing specialists: Raphael Podolsky reported that the Judicial Department is apparently considering a revision of lines of authority in the housing courts under which the housing specialists for each court would be responsible to the clerk of that court. The Executive Committee has recommended that housing specialists should be responsible to a chief statewide housing specialist, not to local housing court clerks. It was also reported that only one housing court (Hartford-New Britain) has a chief housing specialist. This latter issue was referred to the Executive Committee.

(13) Meeting locations: At the request of the Council, Douglas Mintz will attempt to schedule the next Council meeting at the housing court in New Haven.

(14) Norwalk housing court: It was reported that the Judicial Department is considering having the Norwalk housing court use a small converted jury room as its courtroom, rather than the larger courtroom it now uses. Several Council members expressed concern that the jury room would be unsuitably small and would force litigants to wait in the hallways. It was moved that the Council opposes moving the Norwalk housing court out of its present location and into the proposed former jury room (motion by Kevin Tierney, second by Aura Diaz). The motion was approved unanimously.

(15) Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



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Raphael L. Podolsky  
Secretary

Addendum to minutes

On September 12, 1985, Chairperson Douglas Mintz designated Joseph Wincze as chairperson of the Bridgeport-Norwalk Subcommittee.