



CITIZENS ADVISORY -
COUNCIL FOR HOUSING MATTERS



Reply to: 104 Beacon St.
Hartford, CT. 06105
(203) 232-7748

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF JUNE 10, 1992

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by Chairman Rafael Podolsky. The following persons were present:

Ethel Austin	Karin Nigol
Fran Calafiore	Dick Palmer
Elizabeth Casey	David Pels
Murray Czaczkes	Rafael Podolsky
Laura Diaz	Walt Simmers
Elaine DeNigris	William Sadek
Dom Galluzzo	Richard Tenenbaum
Sheldon Hosen	Joseph Wincze
Pam Kuczo	Joseph Zibbideo

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES:

Following the approval of the agenda, a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of Dec. 9, 1991, was made and seconded.

STATUS OF APPOINTMENTS:

Rafe reported that he was told they are imminent.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Tabled.

HOUSING COURT UPDATE:

1. Judge Assignments: Judge Holzberg was assigned in Hartford/New Britain. Expecting turnover in Waterbury/New Haven and Bridgeport/Norwalk. Judge Leheny does not wish to serve again.
2. Prosecution Issues: Dom Galluzzo reported a change in Lead Paint regulations regarding toxicity levels. Also reported that they are seeking an arrest warrant for the owner of Fire & Security Equipment Co., and a search warrant for his business. They were notified by Consumer Protection that he was operating a scam, posing as a safety inspector and charging people, but doing nothing for them.

Dick Palmer stated that he'd like to take an active role with Dom on addressing Housing Prosecution issues, and hopes to be able to respond to Council concerns regarding prosecution of cases in certain areas, and the attentiveness one may or may not receive in a particular CA.

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Dick also reported that even though prosecutors from his office are available, the State's Attorney in Danbury, Walter Flannagan, prefers to handle housing prosecution matters himself. Dick spoke to Dom about this, and they will try to work out an arrangement acceptable to the Council and others interested in effective prosecution of housing matters in Danbury. He was pleased to report that there is an open channel of communication with his office and Dom's, and housing prosecutors and advocates. He hopes to continue that in the future.

Rafe reported that regarding the 1992 Prosecutors Report, additional information has been provided on contributions. By the end of the summer, more should be done. Hope for the future is that some kind of record keeping system be established, in which housing prosecution cases are identifiable. Proposals were made in the last Bi-Annual Report that the full desposition of a case be put on the court record, so that the clerk who keeps the docket sheets is able to pick it up and record it. This would enable us to do analysis from the docket sheets.

3. Clerk's Office Issues:

Spanish Translations - Joe Wincze reported that it was decided at the last meeting that the best thing to have translated was the Tenant's Guide To Summary Process. The information in the booklet was revised within the last six months. They anticipate doing an updated booklet by October 1. Bill Sadek stated that Judge Ment needs to approve the content before they can get it printed.

Recruitment of Bilingual Employees - Joe Wincze reported that he contacted three agencies that deal with Spanish speaking clientele. They would be willing to distribute information on job openings. Bill reported that Judicial has an active recruitment program, and advertises in various minority publications. Judicial would not treat housing positions any differently from other hiring practices. Rafe suggested that if we compiled a list of Spanish organizations, and if Bill could notify us of any job openings, we could do the mailing to these organizations. If we do the mailing, we can guarantee some accountability. Joe Wincze will compile a list. Richard Tenenbaum reported that Affirmatiive Action may have a statewide list. He will send anything he comes up with to Joe at the Bridgeport Fair Housing Office at 525 Water St., Bridgeport, 06604.

Walt Simmons asked whether it should be a requirement for job applicants to be bilingual. Rafe said it should be a desirable quality, but not mandatory. Walt suggested that if an assessment of this issue indicated that a majority of the people are not being properly served, then perhaps it should be a "preferred" requirement, if not mandatory. Joe and Rafe concurred that although there are interpreters available in Housing Court, they may not be available at the counter or may not be present for a full session. Rafe suggested that a statement be sent with all notices of Housing Court positions that bilingual applicants are preferable. Bill said that they have used that statement for Clerks and Specialists, but can't use it for clerical positions due to union issues. Dom reported that his Commission removed that statement from their ads. The Commission decides what wording will be used.

4. Housing Specialist Issues:

Personnel Changes - Fran reported that Housing Specialist Nancy Kirsted who covered Derby, Danbury, Winsted, and Meriden, has been promoted. Given a freeze on hiring from the outside, Fran split up her districts as equitably as possible among the remaining eight housing specialists. Some courts had to switch court days, but she managed to maintain coverage through July. But due to previously committed vacation times, some courts may not have complete coverage for August. They hope to hire someone by September, but Nancy's position must be kept vacant until her "acting" promotion becomes permanent. Richard expressed concern about cases going into limbo, if courts don't have adequate coverage. He stated that two of the Judges continue to disqualify themselves from housing cases. Rafe asked if there was any way to fill the position on a temporary basis? Fran said that one option is to hire a temp without benefits. But the pay scale would only be \$10.00 per hour with no benefits. It would be difficult to find a good candidate at that rate. Richard suggested the possibility of using volunteer attorneys. Fran said she would consider that. She will contact whoever is in charge of a district that may be affected by a scheduling problem.

Housing Specialist Forms - Richard said he asked at the last meeting if the Council could have access to Housing Court statistics. He asked if at the end of each mediation, the Specialists could fill out data on the nature of the parties, and the nature of the case, to determine who is using the Housing Courts. Fran said that statistics are okay, but raw data may be a problem because: a.) mediation is confidential, b.) it would be a lot of work for them to white-out the names on each data sheet, and c.) the data is not compiled, and it would be burdensome to make hundreds of copies of those data sheets.

OTHER BUSINESS:1. New Legislation in 1992:

- a.) Interest rate on security deposits lowered to 4%, but kicks back to 5% in two years. A proposal to have a floating rate was rejected.
- b.) Change in eviction procedures. Reduced notice to quit period from 8 to 5 days. Reduced 20 day stay of execution to 15 days in lapse of time cases.
- c.) Conditions required to constitute "Abandonment": 1. substantially all of the tenant's possessions are removed by the tenant or his agent; 2. tenant is more than two months behind in rent; 3. tenant told landlord that he was going to move out by a certain date.
- d.) Law creating drug-free zones around any assisted housing, not just public housing projects. Mandatory three year sentence added for persons convicted of drug sales.

2. Small Claims Housing Court: Richard reported that there are crazy results in Small Claims Housing Court because judges aren't informed. Bill said there was no manual for magistrates in housing. A manual would probably ensure more consistent rulings. Rafe suggested we work on a manual. Richard volunteered to put something together. Rafe said that there should be some process to review magistrate appointments and questioned whether we could be involved in evaluating them.

ADJOURNMENT:

Rafe moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded. Meeting adjourned at 4:10p.m.