



CITIZENS ADVISORY
COUNCIL FOR HOUSING MATTERS



Reply to: 80 Jefferson St.
Hartford, CT. 06106
Phone: (203) 278-5688
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MINUTES OF THE MEETING DECEMBER 13, 1993

1. PRELIMINARY MATTERS

a. Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 2:15 p.m. by Chairperson Raphael Podolsky. Those present included: Nancy Kierstead, Peter W. Rotella, Sister Suzanne Gebrian, Joelen Gates, Richard Tenenbaum, Robert Kor, Suzanne Colosanto, Hon. Douglas Mintz, David Pels, Murray Czaczkes, Karin Nigol, Barbara Perry, Elaine DeNigris, Raphael Podolsky, Joe Wincze, Cynthia Teixeira and Linda Francois.

b. Agenda and Minutes

The current agenda and the minutes of the meeting were approved.

c. Treasurer's Report: Barbara Perry

We have \$308.00 on account. There may be some outstanding bills. The Council of Churches is holding funds left over from Fairfield grant. Last expenditures were the plaques for Fran Calafiore and Bill Sadek.

Raphie Podolsky suggested we give the balance of the funds to charity or use it for some useful purpose after payment of bills.

2. HOUSING COURT OPERATIONS REPORTS

a. Judges

Judge Mintz is now sitting in New Haven Housing Court. He replaced Judge Riddle who moved out of state. He stated that he looks forward to working with the Council (he was previously a Council chairperson). Ethel Austin was appointed to the State Commission on Aging and has resigned from the Council. The Council is down to 20-21 members out of 36.

b. Magistrates

1. Magistrate's booklet completed and well received. Distributed in fall magistrate's training and cited by Judge Riddle.

2. Review of Magistrates

a. Separate housing training for magistrates. Suzanne Colosanto volunteered to give a program on housing but the case flow unit felt it was unnecessary. Motion made by Murray Czaczkes to recommend that magistrates be given a housing training session. Second: Robert Kor. Motion carried.

b. Questionnaire

Judicial is supposed to be developing a questionnaire. Judges are currently subject to an evaluation form sent to lawyers. On average magistrates serve only once every two months. A discussion ensued re: usefulness of questionnaire. Richard Tenenbaum said it was a good idea even to send it to pro ses as long as their status was discernible from the questionnaire; Murray Czaczkes and Nancy Kierstead countered that pro se's are not objective. Suzanne Colosanto explained the existing process for complaining about magistrates and stated that Clerks' views of magistrates are passed on to officials so that bad magistrates are not reappointed

A motion made by Robert Kor, Second Murray Czaczkes to encourage Judicial to extend the use of the judge evaluation questionnaire to magistrates or otherwise routinely evaluate them. Motion carried. A survey questionnaire committee was appointed: Joe Wincze, Barbara Perry, Robert Kor. Barbara Perry volunteered to draft a proposed questionnaire form

c. Housing Specialists (HS)

Cynthia Teixeira congratulated on becoming new Manager of Dispute Resolution (replacing Nancy Kierstead).

A new HS will be hired to replace Cynthia. Judicial has been very cooperative in including the Council in the interviewing process. Raphie sat in on the Manager of Dispute Resolution interviews.

Joe Wincze asked if he could sit in on a HS mediation session. Cynthia Teixeira stated that would not be a problem for her as long as the litigants agreed.

d. Housing Clerks

A Bridgeport housing clerk position will be opening up. There is a question whether this will be open to all persons. Judicial said we can have one council member involved in process. Bob Kor moved to

recommend it be an open hiring process as in previous hires. Second Barbara Perry. Motion carried.

e. Prosecutors

Housing Unit Disbanded. Supervision of prosecutors has been transferred to the local state's attorney (we have opposed this for years). So far there has been no substantial problem but there will probably be long term repercussions from the temptation to use more of housing prosecutors' time for non-housing matters.

Dominick Galluzzo is nominally in charge of housing prosecutors but he does not supervise them anymore. Raphael Podolsky stated that the practical effect on the council was that it will be much harder for us to gather information and make suggestions. The Council resolved to encourage joint meetings of housing prosecutors especially for uniform enforcement of laws, i.e., new lead paint laws.

Bob Kor reported on continuing problems with lack of prosecution in Danbury. Bob will call John Bailey.

3a. Other Business

1. Lead Paint Laws - should there be a model approach? The legislature and legal services have task forces on it. Committee appointed: Murray Czaczkes, Elaine DeNigris, Joelen Gates.

2. Next Meeting - probably not until June. End of 1994 need a new biennial report.

3. Joelen Gates reported that litigants in the G.A. Courts, especially Danbury, do not know they do not have to come to a mediation agreement. Proposal made to put notice on stipulation forms. Cynthia Teixeira reported it is on her stipulation forms but is more effective when explained orally - which she does.

4. Discussion re: availability of housing forms in G.A. Courts. All forms are available but not necessarily distributed. A list of forms is put up in some G.As. New London has all forms on a rack but some courts do not have enough space for it, i.e., Rockville. Linda Francois suggested that a checklist of forms with brief explanations be available to give to pro ses to check off which forms they want.

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:20 p.m.

/s/ Linda P. Francois
Linda P. Francois, Secretary



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September 23, 1993
Chairperson's report

(1) Judges: All three sitting housing court judges (Judges, Holzberg, Riddle, and Melville) were reappointed for another one-year term in September; but New Haven-Waterbury Housing Court judge Clarine Riddle subsequently announced her resignation from the Superior Court to move to Maryland. Her replacement, who has not yet been announced, is expected to begin sitting in the housing court by around October 1.

(2) Chief housing specialist: Nancy Kiersted has transferred to a new position, although she is still acting as Chief Housing Specialist on a transitional basis. Hiring has not yet begun to replace her but the position is expected to be posted soon. It will be an in-house promotional position, although it will not be limited to housing specialists (i.e., other qualified state employees will also be allowed to apply). The Advisory Council will be included in an advisory capacity in the hiring process.

(3) Magistrate training: The Judicial Department will distribute the Council's magistrate booklet on small claims issues to all magistrates in connection with its September magistrate training program. It has also printed a supply of booklets for the Council's own use.

(4) Magistrate evaluation: We will be meeting with the Judicial Department on ways to gather more information about how the magistrate program is working in housing small claims cases. One possibility is some kind of litigant questionnaire, but other alternatives will also be considered.

(5) Housing prosecution issues: A subcommittee consisting of Rafie Podolsky, Murray Czaczkes, Joe Zabbiddeo, and Dick Tenenbaum met September 23 with the new Chief State's Attorney, John Bailey, to discuss changes which he has made in the prosecution system. Mr. Bailey expressed a strong commitment to housing prosecution. He agreed to try to work out problems about prosecution in Danbury by talking to the state's attorney for that district. Domenick Galluzzo has replaced Steve Sellers as our contact with the Chief State's Attorney's office. He will, however, no longer be directly supervising the four housing prosecutors, although they will continue to meet periodically as a group. The prosecutors will instead be supervised by the state's attorneys for the judicial districts where they will be working. This means multiple supervisors for housing prosecutors who cover more than one district, although each will have a primary supervisor. The Council had recommended against this change, and the subcommittee remains worried that it will result in greater pressures to divert housing prosecutors to non-housing matters, will cause confusion in regard to supervision, and may make it harder to maintain accountability. We will try to monitor how well the revised structure works out.