



CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR HOUSING MATTERS



Reply to:

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MINUTES OF MEETING OF MARCH 20, 1996

Present: Linda François, Richard Tenenbaum, Edward Sanady, Frank Dineen, Robin Hammeal-Urban, Carmen Neale, Cynthia D. Teixeira, Suzanne Colasanto, Vic Feigenbaum, Marie A. Langan, Odessa Young, Joe Wincze, Ivan Hirsch, Chip Haslun, Rafie Podolsky, Carolyn Comerford, Houston Putnam Lowry, Rachel Heerema, David Pels, Robert J. Kor, Sheldon Hosen.

1. Preliminary Matters. The agenda was approved and the minutes of the meeting of December 13, 1995 were approved with the following correction: paragraph 2b- the resignation was effective 11/1/95 not "10/1/95."

2. Housing Court Operations Reports.

a. **Housing Clerks.** S. Colasanto reported there will be 9 Housing Session layoffs for stated reason of lack of money in budget to pay arbitrated pay raises: Norwalk 2, Bridgeport 1, New Haven 2, Waterbury 1, New Britain 1, Hartford 2 and there may be further layoffs. Entire positions were eliminated, especially personnel with experience. Almost all deputy clerks were eliminated, largely outstanding and knowledgeable employees. At a minimum the quality and amount of assistance to pro se's will be adversely affected. Clerk's offices will be severely understaffed.

R. Podolsky reported on rumors of relocation and consolidation of Housing Sessions. H. Lowry reported that filing fees make the judicial branch a profit for the state.

Discussion re: raising legislative and judicial consciousness of the importance of the Housing Courts.

Motion passed unanimously as follows:

Resolved, that the proposed layoffs should not occur as the housing courts cannot operate effectively with the proposed layoffs.

Chip Haslun was appointed to write a letter to be sent to judicial, executive and legislative office holders regarding layoffs. Committee established to review the letter: I. Hirsch, R. Podolsky, L. François, C. Comerford. A copy of final letter to be sent to all council members.

Impact of slower turnaround on Housing Court cases discussed: Hartford vacancy rate already 25% will increase, rental income of public housing will be less, property taxes will not be paid because of lower rental income, more properties falling into foreclosure.

Discussion re: methods council members may use to inform public of dire consequences of layoffs on Housing: advise local papers to run impact stories, generate housing specific articles.

b. **Housing Specialists.** C. Texiera reported that housing specialists are not currently threatened with layoffs. New housing specialist working out well. R. Podolsky advised that statutes require a certain level of staffing.

c. Housing Prosecutors. None present. R. Podolsky reported that he had particularly asked Dominic Galluzzo to send a delegate to meeting and he had said he would. Adam Scott is the new housing prosecutor for E. Connecticut. Doing only 50% housing at most. E. Connecticut subcommittee to meet with him. Hartford prosecutor transferred out of housing. New Haven prosecutor doing Hartford also. New Britain being handled by Bridgeport-Norwalk. Litchfield and Middletown have no housing prosecutor.

Motion made by Robert Kor. Seconded by Joe Wincze, and unanimously passed that a request be made to Jack Bailey that the Chief State's attorney's office to make sure someone comes to Council meeting to represent Housing Prosecutors and report of housing prosecution.

A further motion made by H. Lowry, second Dick Tenenbaum, was unanimously passed that a letter be written to Jack Bailey urging that the vacant Housing Prosecutor position be filled because of the importance of lead paint prosecution, etc.

H. Lowry designated to write letter.

3. Old Business

- a. No new appointments to council.
- b. New Forms: notice of judgment and complaint forms reviewed by C. Comerford and suggestions forwarded to S. Colasanto. Carmen Neale substituted for R. Kor on committee. Committee members to circulate forms around committee. I. Hirsch reported that Notice to Quit form did not track statute. He will send a letter to S. Colasanto re: this, she will forward it to judicial services to be put in Notice to Quit file for next revision. Letter to litigants reported never got to Bridgeport and should be made available there.
- c. Magistrate Evaluation survey ongoing.
- d. Bridgeport sheriff. Issue dropped from agenda after discussion of perceived lack of need by local officials.
- e. Computer related issues - decisions generally available although LEXIS not on line.
- f. Subcommittee on Housing Quality. R. Hereema additional committee member.

4. New Business.

- a. Pending Legislation. (R. Podolsky).
 - 1. Senate bill 173 -- abolition of rental assistance program.
 - 2. HB5454. Just approved by judiciary committee. Establishes uniform 5 day stay after judgment. Makes deliberate tenant damage a crime. When security deposits are returned without interest, double damages penalty will apply only to interest. Combining Notice to Quit and writ removed from bill.
 - 3. Senate bill 242 -- Requires Housing Specialists to create registry of tenants. This information is already available from private agencies for a fee and there is recourse in case of error. Violation of use and occupancy deposit order would accelerate time frames to file objection and answer. This bill would create increased work load for clerks.
 - 4. H.B. 5721 - Would give some protection to tenants in just cause evictions of elderly and dispossessed due to foreclosures.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

-- Linda Francois, Secretary