



CITIZENS ADVISORY
COUNCIL FOR HOUSING MATTERS



Reply to: 45 Lyon Terrace
Bridgeport, CT 06604
203-576-8323

NOTICE OF MEETING

**2:00 p.m.
Wednesday, June 19, 2002**

Connecticut Bar Association
30 Bank St., New Britain
(860-223-4400 for directions)

Meeting Minutes of March 13, 2002

In attendance: Joe Wincze, Suzanne Colasanto, Cheryl Wilcox, Cynthia Teixeira, Richard Tenenbaum, Ivan Hirsch, Herb Reckmeyer, Richard DeParle, J. Andre Fournier, Raphael Podolsky, David Pels, and Jeff Hammer.

Preliminary Matters:

The meeting was called to order at 2:10 P.M.

The meeting agenda was approved

The minutes of December 12th meeting were approved

Housing Court Operations Reports

Housing Prosecutor:

Since Judy Rothschild was not present at the meeting, there was no report from the Housing Prosecutor. With regards to the agenda items, R. Podolsky said he had no information on the prosecution manual but I. Hirsch did say the Housing Court Prosecutor in Bridgeport does have an office now in the same building as the Housing Court and she was satisfied.

Housing Clerks (Suzanne Colasanto):

Staffing Issues: Edmond O'Garro, formerly a housing specialist with the Waterbury/New Haven Housing Court, was hired as the assistant clerk for the Bridgeport/Norwalk Housing Court.

Language Line/Translator Availability: A written report was distributed prepared by Sandra

Desrosiers (who was absent). The report indicated that the procedures to use the Language Line Services are still being determined by the Judicial Language Services Office. Anyone who gains access to the password can use this line and the State will be charged for the call. As of this date, there is no outlined policy or procedure for using the Language Line Services but it is actively being reviewed and discussed within the Judicial Language Services Office. This same office does supply interpreters to be present at the courts upon written request. The consensus of the meeting was that there is adequate translation capacity presently available at the housing courts and that use of Language Line is not ordinarily needed.

Web Site Update: Jeff Hammer reported getting closer, currently on test server getting ready to go over to production server within a month's time. Summary process program, which computerizes all the evictions, is available in Hartford and will soon be available in New Haven Housing Court.

Pamphlet Update (Suzanne Colasanto): Currently, there are four pamphlets available in each housing court which have been prepared by the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch which include: "A Landlord's Guide To Summary Process" (English Only), "A Tenant's Guide To Summary Process" (English & Spanish), and "Rights & Responsibilities of Landlords and Tenants in Connecticut" (English Only). This last booklet will also be available in Spanish but it is not clear when it will be made available.

Housing Specialists (Cynthia Teixeira):

Cynthia reported lost one specialist in Waterbury/New Haven but will be getting a new one shortly. Ads have already been placed in the newspaper advertising the position, and the ads indicate that Spanish-speaking is desirable. Attorney Peter Blasini has agreed to assist with the interviews. Also announced that housing specialists in New Haven will be getting computers soon.

In response to a question, J. Hammer stated that if a summary case does not settle in housing specialist negotiations and a trial is necessary, it is now usually taking place within a week to two (2) weeks. The litigators present indicated that this shortened delay is no longer significantly impacting negotiations.

At this point, I. Hirsch wished to state that the main reason why same day trials work well in Bridgeport is because of the fine work of the housing specialists who are so effective at mediating cases and eliminating any backlog.

Informational Update on Pending Legislation (Raphael Podolsky):

S.B. 591 — bill put forth and supported by the hotel and motel association in Connecticut, which attempts to clearly define one's rights while staying in a hotel, motel, or bed-and-breakfast. The problem with the bill is that it fails to distinguish between transient guests and long-term residents.

Bill sponsored by municipality which proposed a moratorium on evictions from December 15th to January 15th died in the Judiciary Committee.

S.B. 97 - would allow use of Security Deposit Guarantee Program by tenants with Section 8 or RAP certificates and provide monies for a source-of-income testing program (alive & in Appropriations Committee)

S.B. 115 - state-funded demonstration program which would make monies available to replace wooden windows in pre-1950 buildings. (alive & in Finance Committee)

S.B. 348 - bill which would classify lead paint problems into three categories: good/fair/poor, with different abatement requirements for fair and poor paint conditions (on its way to the floor)

S.B. 390 - bill which came out of the Public Safety Committee which requires the State Building Inspector to identify State Building Code waivers which are commonly granted for older buildings and to get local building officials to grant them more quickly.

H.B. 5105 - bill from housing prosecutors to require towns not to use back taxes as a reason for denying a building permit if the owner is under a code enforcement order to make repairs (died in Planning and Development Committee)

Other Business:

S. Colasanto reported that tenants are being prosecuted in New Haven for malicious damage when the situation warrants it. A question had been raised at a previous meeting as to whether or not any prosecutions were being brought. Did not have the specifics on the cases but said that the prosecutor could provide details.

The Council was asked about the practicality of creating a system for evaluation of housing court clerks by the litigants and attorneys, similar to the evaluation of judges. After much discussion regarding this issue, the Council decided to table it and take it up at the next meeting.

The question was also raised as to whether there should be any specific uniform criteria for military affidavits. The consensus from members present seemed to be that uniform guidelines would create more problems than they would solve and might make it harder to get military affidavits approved. The Council felt that the decisions needed to be left to the judgment of the clerks and the judges.

Adjournment:

Next meeting is scheduled for 2:00 pm on Wednesday, June 19, 2002 at the Connecticut Bar Association's offices at 30 Bank Street, New Britain.

Meeting Adjourned at 3:15 P.M.

Respectfully prepared by:

Joe Wincze, Acting Secretary