



CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR HOUSING MATTERS



Reply to:

Meeting Minutes of March 19, 2003

In attendance: Richard DeParle, Jeff Hammer, Ivan Hirsch, Joe Wincze, Raphael Podolsky, Sandra Desrosiers, Suzanne Colasanto, Richard Tenenbaum, Sonja Devitt, J. Andre Fournier, Cynthia Teixeira, David Pels, Judith R. Decine, Frank Dineen

1. **Preliminary matters** The meeting was called to order at 2:10 p.m.
 - a. *Approval of agenda:* The agenda was approved.
 - b. *Approval of minutes:* The minutes of the December 11, 2002 meeting were approved.

2. **Review of biennial report recommendations and responses received.**

Review and discussion of S. Colasanto's letter dated 2/4/03 to Rafie regarding issues and recommendations contained in the Report to the General Assembly dated 1/3/03.

3. **Housing Court Operations Report**
 - a. *Housing Prosecutor (Judy Decine)*
 - i. *Prosecution Manual updates:* Training manuals will be available for prosecuting attorneys in Geographical Area offices. Such prosecutors handle housing prosecutions if no housing prosecutor is available. The Council requested 30 copies of the completed manual.
 - ii. *Availability of housing inspection reports (David Pels)*

D. Pels reported that the Hartford Housing Code Enforcement office has a written policy that once a case is turned over to the housing prosecutor the records are no longer public records. Discussion ensued resulting in the Council's agreement to record its opinion to be drafted by D. Pels and provided at next meeting.
 - iii. *No-heat prosecution policy – Tabled until next meeting.*
 - iv. *Other - Training for State Troopers and police.* Judy Decine reported that a request has been made to include Landlord/Tenant Rights and Responsibilities training as part of the regular curriculum at the Police Academy. Housing prosecuting attorneys are being shifted as needed because of decreased staff. Currently there is no housing prosecutor in Eastern CT. The cases are being handled by two former housing prosecutors.
 - b. *Housing Clerks: (Suzanne Colasanto)*

Staffing issues: Several positions have been or will be vacated because of State layoffs and early retirement opportunities. New Britain Housing Court could be

severely impacted depending on actual vacancies. No plans to fill any pending positions at this time.

c. *Housing Specialists (Cynthia Teixeira)*

Staff – Cynthia reports similar reductions in the number of housing specialists. Cynthia has undertaken specialist duties as needed. The Council will write a letter to Judicial expressing concern about the staff reductions.

4. Other business

- i. Legislation during this year's General Assembly. There is a bill to raise the small claims maximum from \$3,500 to \$5,000.
- ii. Governor's proposed budget cuts include cut of SAGA and elimination of Safety Net staff. Both may have significant impact on tenants currently receiving benefits under these programs.

The meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Sandra Desrosiers

Secretary