



CITIZENS ADVISORY
COUNCIL FOR HOUSING MATTERS



Reply to:

44 Capitol Ave., Suite 301
Hartford, CT 06106
860-278-5688 x203

NEXT MEETING

2:00 p.m.

Wednesday, September 19, 2007

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

Minutes of June 20, 2007 Citizens Advisory Council meeting

(1) PRELIMINARY MATTERS

(a) Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 2:15 p.m. by Rafie Podolsky, chairperson, at the Burroughs Community Center, 2470 Fairfield Ave., Bridgeport.

(b) Approval of agenda: The agenda was approved.

(c) Approval of minutes: The minutes of the March 21, 2007, meeting were approved.

(2) HOUSING COURT OPERATIONS

(2.1) CLERKS' OFFICES MATTERS:

(a) Small claims manual: The small claims manual is being printed by the Judicial Branch and will be distributed soon.

(b) Staff hiring: The New Haven and Hartford clerical positions are still not filled. Bridgeport is also down one clerical position.

(c) Bridgeport courtroom update: Problems remain. The court has been holding afternoon dockets every day in an effort to spread the cases and hold down the crowding in the courtroom. The seating is sufficient if there are 15 cases or less, but the docket cannot always be held to 15 cases. An additional problem involves the movement of people between the courtroom on the sixth floor and the housing specialist offices on the fifth floor. There are not enough benches on the fifth floor for people to sit and there is no signage. Most of these problems could be eliminated by using the old housing courtroom on the fifth floor, which in reality is often not in use, but that is not being done. The Bridgeport subcommittee will continue to pursue a better solution.

(d) Pro se assistance: Tabled.

(2.2) HOUSING SPECIALIST MATTERS:

(a) Staff hiring: The New Haven vacancy is still not filled.

(b) Rockville printer: Rockville is still awaiting a printer.

(c) Norwich space allocation: Tabled.

(2.3) HOUSING PROSECUTION MATTERS:

(a) Meeting with Kevin Kane: The Advisory Council's Prosecution Subcommittee met with Chief State's Attorney Kevin Kane, Deputy Chief State's Attorney Paul Murray, and housing prosecutor Judy Dicine on June 12, 2007, to discuss the recommendations in the Advisory Council's biennial report.

(b) Police training: The Council's chairperson will write to the Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) Council, which sets the curriculum for the Policy Training Academy, and request mandatory coverage of landlord-tenant law for all new police officers and officer recertifications.

(c) Prosecution guidelines: The administrative search warrant section will no longer be part of these guidelines, so that they are now ready to be finalized by the Chief State's Attorney.

(d) Police training manual: Tabled.

(2.4) JUDICIAL MATTERS

(a) Council participation in judicial assignments: The Judicial Branch has again changed housing court judges without notice to or consultation with the Advisory Council. In Hartford-New Britain, Judge Bentivegna was abruptly transferred to New Britain four months before the end of his assignment and Judge Susan Peck was assigned to complete his term. In addition, judicial assignments for the year beginning September 1, 2007, were made in June without consultation with the Advisory Council. The chairperson protested to and met with the Judicial Branch and has been assured that this problem will not recur in the future.

(b) Judicial assignments for September: Judge Peter Wiese will become the housing court judge for Hartford-New Britain in September. Judge Crawford will remain in the New Haven-Waterbury Housing Court, Judge Cocco will remain in the Bridgeport Housing Court, and Judge Grogins will remain in the Norwalk Housing Court.

(c) Small claims matters: Rich DeParle reported that the long delays in processing and hearing housing small claims cases have not been resolved. Although the time to enter data into the computer system may have decreased, it still takes months to get an actual hearing. Rich will meet with Chief Court Administrator Lavery about this soon. It was also reported that, in at least some instances, when a small claims housing case is transferred to the civil docket at the request of a defendant (which a defendant can do as a matter of

right), the transfer has erroneously been to the regular civil court, rather than to the housing court's civil docket. The chairperson was directed to write to the Judicial Branch about this. He was also directed to write specifically about the Council's recommendation that the small claims complaint form be modified to require plaintiffs to state whether the case is or is not a housing case. This can help make sure that all housing cases are grouped together when they are assigned for hearing.

(d) Library availability of housing court decisions: Tabled.

(e) WestLaw and other reporting services: Tabled.

(3) LEGISLATIVE REPORT

There was little significant landlord-tenant legislation adopted. The most significant change may have been budgetary, in that the funding for the state's Rental Assistance Program (RAP) was increased. The bill to make landlords rather than towns responsible for storing tenant possessions after an eviction did not pass. A bill to modify the lead abatement rules was not adopted during the regular session but may well be included in a bill to be acted upon during the current special session.

(4) ADVISORY COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS. No action.

(5) ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 5 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Raphael Podolsky, Chairperson