



## CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR HOUSING MATTERS



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### **Minutes of the meeting of December 12, 2012**

**Persons present:** Kathy Flaherty, Noel Whitney (Greater Bridgeport Property Owners Association) , Rich DeParle , Sonja Devitt, Richard Tenenbaum, Sharon Levy, John Rowland, Paul Bassleu (GBPOA), Raphael Podolsky, Carl Lupinacci, Chris Rosario (City of Bridgeport, Anti-Blight Initiative – 203-576-3931), David Pels, Judy Dicine

#### **1) PRELIMINARY MATTERS**

- a. **Call to order:** The meeting was called to order by the chairperson, Raphael Podolsky, at 1:43 pm at the Burroughs Community Center, 2470 Fairfield Avenue, Bridgeport.
- b. **Approval of agenda:** The agenda was approved without objection (with modification as to order to accommodate schedules of attendees).
- c. **Approval of minutes:** The minutes of the September 12, 2012 meeting were approved on a motion made by Rich DeParle and seconded by Richard Tenenbaum.

#### **2) REVIEW OF DRAFT OF 2013 BIENNIAL REPORT**

- a. The chairperson presented a revised draft of the report. Changes from the prior draft were based on new data from the Judicial Branch and comments from the last Advisory Council meeting. The chairperson also received written comments from Chief Housing Clerk Suzanne Colasanto, which were reviewed with the Council.
- b. The new caseload data information reveals a large drop in the number of criminal cases opened in some housing court districts. In Bridgeport, the drop was 88%. It is not clear if this reflects the absence of a full-time prosecutor or the failure of municipalities to do code inspections. Bridgeport has only four code enforcement officers, who are doing both code and anti-blight work, i.e., the staff has been reduced while their duties have been expanded. Bridgeport is also shifting housing code enforcement to anti-blight inspection, which raises municipal revenue by generating fines to towns. Housing code enforcement generates fines only to the state.

- c. The Council directed the chairperson to communicate to the Chief State's Attorney the importance of filling vacant housing prosecutor positions, particularly for Bridgeport/Norwalk.
- d. An issue was raised concerning delay in the issuance of summary process executions by the Norwalk Housing Court clerk's office. The chairperson or Rich DeParle will call the Norwalk court to see how they handle the issuance of such executions.
- e. The tables in the report concerning the time to process cases are based on the time between return date and the date of entry of judgment. The Advisory Council does not have data either before the return date or after the entry of final judgment, and the report therefore limits its analysis to that time period.

After full discussion, the draft report was adopted unanimously as the report of the Advisory Council.

- 3) **JUDICIAL ASSIGNMENT** - It is not clear who will be hearing housing cases in the Bridgeport/Norwalk Housing Court. Judge Hauser passed away in November. Currently the court is using judge trial referees (JTR's) to cover. The chairperson has contacted Chief Court Administrator and, at her request, has resubmitted to her the names of judges recommended by the Council a year ago. The Council's position remains the same, i.e., that a judge rather than a JTR should be assigned and the same judge should hear cases in both Bridgeport and Norwalk.
- 4) **PROSECUTION MATTERS (TABLED FROM SEPTEMBER 12)** (administrative search warrants, anti-blight/broken windows/clean and lien enforcements)
  - Tabled again.** It was reported that the Chief State's Attorney is considering whether to submit a bill on administrative search warrants. It was also reported that there is active anti-blight enforcement in various communities. Police-led code enforcement is in the training phase. There is a task force that is developing programming for municipalities. The federal Department of Justice is a possible funding source.
- 5) **ADVISORY COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS** – No news. The Governor does have someone working on appointments.
- 6) **2013 LEGISLATIVE SESSION** – Potential legislative issues were discussed briefly.
- 7) **OTHER BUSINESS** – The meeting schedule for 2013 was approved. It will be subject to change if the Governor appoints new Council members. For the time being, the Council will continue with present schedule of quarterly meetings, alternating between New Britain and Bridgeport, at 1:30 pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the months of March, June, September, and December. It was also agreed that, in the future, meetings **will** begin promptly at 1:30.

**8) ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 3:45 pm (motion made by John Rowland, seconded by Carl Lupinacci)

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Flaherty, temporary secretary