

LANDLORD-TENANT RELATIONS BOARD
Wednesday, December 7, 2022 – 7:00 P.M.
301 King Street, Chet and Sabra Avery Conference Room
Alexandria, VA 22314
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Bonnie Naugle at 7:17 p.m. Board members, guests, and staff introduced themselves.

A. BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Elliott Waters, Bonnie Naugle, Elijah St. Dennis, Olivia Jenkins, Katherine O’Connell

B. BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Geri Baldwin

C. STAFF PRESENT: Melodie Seau, Siomara Amaya

D. GUESTS PRESENT: Gloria Sitton, City Clerk

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA: Ms. O’Connell moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. St. Dennis. The motion passed unanimously.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 7, 2022, MEETING: Vice Chair Waters moved to amend the minutes as follows:

At the end of Section 3, Mr. Waters indicated that the City’s Advisory Groups Member Handbook specified the Attendance Report was to be submitted with the Annual Report. Chair Naugle repeated that the attendance report was submitted to the City at the same time as the annual report, but the pdfs were separate documents.

Mr. Waters asked that the fifth paragraph of Section 4 be amended to say, “Vice Chair Waters asked that CLI (Community Lodgings, Inc.) complete and return the questionnaire that he provided to the developer. Staff noted that the questions on the questionnaire are not coming from the Board as whole, and she said that CLI has been very responsive. Mr. Waters said that the LTRB meeting was not noticed in compliance with FOIA nor the LTRB’s bylaws and that the Relocation Plan was not provided board member in accordance with appropriate guidelines. He noted the plan was dated October 15 but he did not receive the plan until Friday, October 28 at 6:10pm. Mr. Brown noted that the plan was still being edited with discussion with city staff between those dates without specifying those edits during the Wednesday, November 02, 2022 Board Meeting.” Ms. Naugle requested the addition, “Ms. Naugle noted that there is no requirement to submit plans one week in advance because they are presented in the meeting.”

Mr. Waters requested that the sixth paragraph of Section 4 be revised to say, “Ms. Olivia Jenkins moved to recommend the relocation plan to City Council. The motion was seconded by Elijah St. Dennis. The motion passed five to one with Mr. Waters abstaining until the developer delivered on their promise to incorporate agreed to revisions to the Relocation Plan by the end of the week (November 4, 2022).”

Mr. Waters moved to approve the minutes with the modifications suggested. Ms. Jenkins seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

4. CHAIR’S REPORT: Chairperson Naugle highlighted equity initiatives discussed during the update on Zoning for Housing Initiatives and the Companion Housing for All Equity Component in Support of the Production of Market and Affordable Housing that were considered at the November 22, 2022, City Council Meeting. Ms. Naugle said that the initiatives were similar to discussions by the Board regarding the impact of segregation on zoning policies and reducing the residual effects of these policies. Ms. Naugle encouraged board members to review the materials presented at the meeting.

<https://alexandria.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5939021&GUID=0EE41615-07DE-45BA-83B9-C39EC2E321A9>

Ms. Naugle also reported that she had attended the quarterly Boards and Commissions meeting hosted by DCHS. She said that there were many initiatives being considered by other human service-related boards and commissions including expanding affordable housing, and creating new tenant protections. Ms. Naugle said that these would be discussed in the upcoming item on recommendations to City Council.

5. STAFF REPORT: Melodie Seau called the Board’s attention to the Alexandria West Planning process. She said that the City has begun an 18-month planning process to encourage community input to create a vision for the future of Alexandria West, addressing topics such as equity, culture, housing, getting around, land use, parks, and safety. City has and will continue to host a variety of in-person and virtual events to share information and gather community input that will guide the plan. Ms. Seau encouraged board members to go online and take the community poll.

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/AlexandriaWest>

6. CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO CITY COUNCIL: Ms. Naugle distributed a copy of the final resolution adopted by the Board in November. Mr. Waters said that he believed that the two proposed resolutions had been combined. Ms. Seau said that she copied the language from the resolution Mr. Waters submitted and no changes were made. Ms. Naugle said that the second resolution was not discussed at the meeting in November, and only the first resolution had been approved by the Board.

Ms. O’Connell outlined the proposal for requesting guidance from the City on breed restrictions. She said that although Virginia law prohibits municipal dog breed restrictions,

private landlords may still discriminate against breeds that are wrongly believed to be aggressive. Breeds such as Pit Bull Terriers, Staffordshire Terriers, Bull Terriers, German Shepherds, Rottweilers, Mastiffs, and others are often prohibited, and these prohibitions have roots in racism and are not based in science, do not promote public safety, and ultimately cause discrimination in housing.

Ms. O'Connell proposed that the Landlord-Tenant Relations Board (LTRB) recommend that the Alexandria City Council extend the state prohibition on breed restrictions to housing units within the city, if doing so is not prohibited by the Dillon Rule. If this action is prohibited by the Dillon Rule, the LTRB asks City Council to promote guidelines for corporate and individual landlords that discourages against including breed restrictions in leases.

Mr. Waters recommended sharing the proposal with The Federation of Civic Associations. Ms. Jenkins said that the City could recommend reasonable weight restrictions rather than breed restrictions. Ms. Seau said that the proposal could also be shared with landlords. Ms. Naugle agreed to send the proposal around for comment.

Ms. Naugle discussed support for proposals from other Boards and Commissions, which stemmed from a meeting of the Boards and Commissions chairs, hosted by DCHS. The quarterly meeting includes the Alexandria Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AAHAC), Commission for Women, Economic Opportunities Commission (EOC), Commission on Aging, and Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission. Ms. Naugle shared a draft memo in support of AAHAC's recommendations. Mr. Waters moved to support the recommendations in principle. The motion was seconded by Mr. St. Dennis and approved unanimously.

Ms. Naugle said the EOC has recommended tenant protections, that landlords certify that units are livable before signing leases, and that the City establish standards for uninhabitable properties. The EOC also recommends requiring notices in other languages that could result in eviction. Additional proposals include prohibiting evictions that are not for cause and limiting rent increases for existing tenants and establishing longer notice periods for rent increases. The EOC also recommends extending the five-day pay or quit notice to the 14-day pay or quit notice and lower the maximum security deposit allowable from two to one month's rent. Ms. Seau said that the people who would be disadvantaged would be people with poor credit. Ms. Seau noted that landlords are sometimes more willing to rent to people with poor credit if the tenant pays two month's security deposit. Ms. Jenkins and Mr. Waters agreed with this assessment. The discussion then moved to the maximum application fee. The city has a maximum allowable fee, but Ms. Naugle noted anecdotally some landlords may charge per person or add additional fees. Board members agreed that keeping the fee to one per household and asking for enforcement mechanisms would be a good addition to the tenant protections letter.

Ms. Naugle said that she would share the Board's comments with the EOC and will share the commission's final proposal.

7. OTHER BUSINESS: Mr. Waters raised an issue of concern noting that the CLI developer had not responded to his request for information. Mr. Waters said that staff commenting that developers do not need to respond to one member's questions is a disservice to the Board. Ms. Naugle said that the plan was approved by the Board and that any changes to the plan would be optional since the plan had been approved as submitted.

Ms. Naugle said she is uncomfortable with sending the developer long forms from individual members. Ms. O'Connell asked if it should be our practice to send questions to the Chair and have the Chair determine what is necessary to convey to the developer. Ms. Naugle said that there cannot be back and forth communication through email. She said that the Chair can receive and share comments. Ms. Sitton said that it is okay for the Board to vet communications collaboratively. She noted that collaboration on documents can be done through Google docs, but it cannot be done through email. Mr. Waters moved to establish as Board policy that all communications to all board members should be sent to the Chair. The motion was seconded by Mr. St. Dennis and approved unanimously.

Ms. Naugle asked if the Board would like to use one of its two virtual meetings in January due to the holiday. The Board agreed to hold a virtual meeting on January 4.

8. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 p.m.