

**SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION
MINUTES**

5/10/2023

6:30-8:00PM

WebEx and Bertha Knight Landes

Commissioners Present: Dan Godfrey, Kim McGillivray, Sendia Registin,

Commissioners Absent: Atif Osmani, Arianna Laureano, Lydia Felty, Char Smith

Commission Staff: Zach Frimmel, Department of Neighborhoods

Guests: Michele Hunter (SDCI, Code Compliance Manager), Geoff Tallent (SDCI, Renters Program Manager)

(Transcriber's Note: Seattle Renters' Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion. The recording of the minutes is available upon request.)

Welcome **6:30 – 6:40 PM**

- Land Acknowledgement
- Labor Acknowledgement
- Initial comment from member of the public

Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections (SDCI) Presentation and Q&A **6:40 – 7:30 PM**

- **Michele Hunter**, Code Compliance Manager (confirmed)
- **Geoff Tallent**, Renter Programs Manager (confirmed)

Geoff and Michele gave a high-level ppt presentation about SDCI's Code Compliant Division, their respective programs, Housing/Zoning Compliance and Renters' programs, priorities when SDCI conducts housing inspections and code compliance, POTa (Property Owner/Tenant Assistance), TRA0 (Tenant Relocation Assistant Ordinance), and the best way to contact SDCI. The best way to contact SDCI is by the Renting in Seattle phone number which staffed during business hours, with first priority to emergency conditions, lock-outs, evictions, and rent increases.

Key questions and comments responding to the presentation:

- There was an acknowledgement of SDCI staffing issues and workload.
- A concern was shared about the \$6,000 threshold for renovations being low and when the threshold and law was originally written.
 - o Response to the concern was that the changing the threshold will always exclude some form of development.
 - A response to the response was that the development thresholds and new potential legislation should benefits tenants and landlords, but tenants feel that they are at a huge disadvantage, and with the standing of the PDA, newer laws should not be undercut by older laws.

- Questions were asked regarding TRAO: whether there was a level of discretion investigating legitimacy of complaints and what happened if a tenant submitted a complaint about an abuse fo TRAO?
 - o Response: TRAO is city law and there is determination if TRAO is appropriate, however TRAO complaints are fairly new.
 - o Response: There is a constraint by what is stated on the development permit and the law.
- A concern was shared about the delays in response from SDCI, triaging complaints to low level, lack of response, enforcement mechanisms against landlords being too minimal to elicit change, and the general timeline for responding to low level complaints.
 - o Response: Ther is a prioritization of complaints, concerns, and requests depending on nature of issue. Not all calls become cases.
 - o There were further discussion as to whether SDCI is “punitive” enough, and that compliance and housing safety were the first priorities. If compliance is still not being met, there would need to be a lawsuit for penalties and to impress funds, and that is a lengthy process.
- Question: What is the state of budget 2023-2024?
 - o Response: There is a carefulness with talking budget, as the budget is under the direction of the mayor’s office and city budget office.

Public Comment (see reverse for process)

7:30 – 8:00PM

- Renter shared situation regarding TRAO as it related to their building renovations with SDCI staff and Commissioners, and their experience with SDCI regarding data requests.
- Another member of the public shared a comment about data about how widespread the issues renters’ are facing.

Commissioner Opportunity to Share

- No quorum for this meeting, Commissioner Kim motioned to move prior month’s meeting minutes to next meeting for approval,
- Regarding new commissioners, Commission Dan asked if there were new applications or forwarded candidates from City council or the mayor – staff Zach Frimmel responded that there were none to either
- Commissioner Kim asked if the timeline could be revamped for approving candidates to the Commission

Adjourn

8:00PM

- No further business being held before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned.