

SWP Housing Committee

Southwest Partnership

February 9, 2023

MINUTES

Meeting start at 7:03pm

Facilitator: Cecilia Gonzalez

Notetaker: Leila Kohler-Frueh (Carrie supports)

Introductions

1. Kevin Gallaher
2. Carrie Baniszewski
3. Katie Little
4. Edith Gilliard
5. Cecilia Gonzalez
6. Alicia Corson
7. Leila Kohler-Frueh
8. Laura Dykes
9. Christian Hall
10. Charisse Lue
11. Tony Scott
12. Roger Wood
13. Diana Geis
14. Scott Kashnow
15. Howard Hughes
16. Derrick McCovey
17. Erika Brockman
18. Chris Firehock
19. Derrick Mii
20. Meghan Cardoso

- Review and approval of [January Minutes](#)
Motion to approve: Laura Dykes. Second: Tony Scott. Ayes have it, no abstentions nor votes against; minutes approved.
- Housing committee structure and time change proposal (Cecilia)
Discussion about keeping meetings to 1.5 hours.
 - 1h30min: intro, education, progress updates/discussion, and community updates

Motion to keep meeting to 1.5 hours: Scott Kashnow. Second: Diana Geis. Ayes have it, no abstentions nor votes against

Tenant Education (in relation to the Resident Handbook) (Charisse Lou)

Charisse Lue provided valuable information for tenants going over the [current SWP Resident's Handbook](#) as a reference. The handbook may need to be updated based on current law and include information on the following:

- It's important to educate landlords and tenants about being clear in the lease. For example, the lease should include the numbers of who is responsible for the utilities and the number to call. Who is responsible for the payment, how payments will be made, etc.
- The landlord is obligated to provide the premises free and clear of any pests including rodents and cockroaches. A tenant should walk through before leasing and make sure to look for any signs of pests including gaps in doors, mouse holes, or droppings. If there are rodents, it is the landlord's responsibility to take care of that. The lease should mention who is responsible, and how many times will pest control come.
- On security deposit. Not all places require a security deposit. It can't be more than two months' rent and (by law) it must go into Escrow (currently at around 1.5% interest).
- Rent receipts should be highlighted as a necessity for tenants to receive, and they should demand as a matter of course. Recommend in a way that is traceable (check, cash app). Make a notation: month, year, what for.
- Property registration, if they are not owner-occupied, they have to be registered, with a led certificate (check before leasing). It is supposed to be attached to the lease at the time of leasing.
- Breaking a lease—tenant needs to give the landlord a 60-days notice, and tenants are responsible for two months rent if they break the lease.
- Tenants should take note of the structure of the house when leasing/moving/renting, and make sure it is sound.
- Tenants, upon discovering conditions in need of repair or other issues, need to inform their landlord in writing. If the landlord does not handle the issue, the tenant can put their rent amount into escrow. If there are ongoing issues, the tenant should seek help.

- There is a general number that people can call for advice. They could also call some non-profits that provide tenant advocacy (Public Justice Center, Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Association, NHS). [Coordinated Intake • Civil Justice \(civiljusticeinc.org\)](#)
- The guide should also include a section on eviction and note that in the City tenants have a right to counsel and provide the phone number (Charisse can send this number).
- Kevin sent this resource: [DHCD Registration \(baltimorehousing.org\)](#)

Q&A Time:

- Trash and Recycling cans—the owner is responsible for these.
- Question about mediation for landlord-tenant issues. Yes, sometimes it is possible to mediate, but not always. Many times there are LLCs and not people.

Charisse noted that she'd like to see items in the handbook that will help empower people and keep them in our neighborhoods.

Even though the things discussed above may not be on the lease, these things still apply (e.g., extermination process, free of pests, etc.).

Discussion:

Cecilia: We need to include the general number and numbers from other centers that offer help for renters. Include a line, an eviction note and the number to call “in MD people have a right to counsel”

Cecilia: others can review the handbook and provide suggestions.

Diana: Would like to get some different artwork on the front cover, and perhaps put some of the information there.

Cecilia: Nate volunteered to do the graphic design.

Tony is also happy to help with the handbook.

Kevin: There is a phone number to check and see if your property is registered rental property.

Handbook Revision Team: Diana, Tony, Lorainne, Meghan, and Nate

Has to be an even number of pages, best to keep it at 8 pages to keep costs at a minimum.

Scott noted that some of the information may go into separate documents so that the handbook is able to be printed (stay within budget).

Diana noted that it was originally segmented into homeowners, renters, and landlords.

Cecilia: Will plan to update this month and then have a look at the final in March.

Progress Updates

- **Habitat Volunteering**

Leila provided an update on Habitat volunteer dates reserved for SWP and Pigtown friends on Feb. 23 and 24. A link to a sign-up was put in the chat, but Diana and Leila will also share the link and details with the group. Meghan will also get the info. To Citizens of Pigtown, the Pigtown Main Street email list, Mt. Clare, etc.

[Join User Group | Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake \(galaxydigital.com\)](https://galaxydigital.com/join-user-group-habitat-for-humanity-of-the-chesapeake)

- **Education**

- March: Fight Blight Bmore (Tax Sale or Vacants?)

Fight Blight BMore will present at the March meeting (they focus on vacants and on tax sale)[The Anatomy of Baltimore's Blight- PC.pdf - Google Drive](#)

Cecilia would like to know which topic the group is most interested in. Most of the responses were focused on tax sale.

- **Meetings.**

- Cecilia reviewed Goals, and reminded that we have 10 meetings per year.
 - We can skip a month in the summer (July or August?), and one more if needed.
- Try for 2 activities outside during late Spring/early Summer/Fall (May, Jun, Sep).

Discussion: Long-term goals

*“The Housing Committee works to **reduce the number and effect of vacant homes** in the Southwest Partnership area and **attract new residents** while ensuring that **current residents can remain** in the area in **safe, quality, affordable housing**.”*

- Reducing vacancy as a result of attracting new residents...
- Vacant building notices... How much time? Residents know better. Properties that aren't getting mail...
- Attracting new residents... Live Baltimore events. Housing Committee should know, neighborhoods associations should represent, we must have printed docs...
- Events, guest speakers, Code enforcement, how does the city define...
- Carrie, propose a change on how to define (workgroup), similar to how they do it in Indianapolis.

Project/Community Updates

- **Carrie—some current projects**

In rem

Have a million-dollar revolving loan fund. The first loan will be finalized at the end of this month (for ½ million)

Also sit on a few workgroups such as a land bank workgroup, tax sale reform (Mayor's workgroup)

There will be a meeting in March for the community at the BioPark

Context: there are seven impact areas in the city, and they have created plans for demo, acquisition, stabilization, etc. This meeting will be a presentation of their plan.

The City will be sending a mailing to the area.

Scott—Way to get info. On specific addresses that do not receive mail, which is a key component for trying to find out which properties are uninhabited/abandoned in a neighborhood.

Tony—might want to invite Hessler, others from the City to talk about how the City defines vacants, and other related issues to vacancy and how residents can help address them.

Carrie—as part of a Mayor’s work group, redefining “vacant” is a current topic. For example, unoccupied, has not received mail, and has not had utilities for a year is a definition in Indianapolis.

Roger shared DC’s definition: [OTR Vacant Real Property | otr \(dc.gov\)](#)

Diana shared a flyer about the “Coffee Break With Alice” being held (virtually) tomorrow, 2/10 at 12noon. There is a registration link.

Scott—do we want to invite code enforcement and discuss Charisse’s points then?

Cecilia—thinking that the April meeting could be with Code Enforcement and be held at the Community Engagement Center (hybrid meeting). Thinking about holding it along with the Commercial and Historic Preservation Committees, but need to ask those committees first.

- **Housing Study**

Carrie—had the housing plan kickoff meeting. Starting small group meetings first (i.e. seniors, students, etc.). There will still be lots of opportunities to engage with the housing plan.

- **Update on meeting with Councilman Bullock, Inclusionary Housing Bill**

Scott—inclusionary housing. A small group met with Councilman Bullock. He is supportive of inclusionary housing. Whether the bill will be successful or not depends on who else supports it. Believe that will be areas like the downtown area. There is an effort to add amendments to make it more palatable.

There is a workgroup meeting on 2/13. It would not be voted on at that point.

Cecilia shared info on the coalition:

[Inclusionary Housing Bill Fact Sheet 10-3-22.pdf - Google Drive](#)

[IH Bill 22-0195 Frequently Asked Questions By the IHC - 1.10.23 PDF.pdf - Google Drive](#)

Motion to end the call: Tony Scott

Second: Scott Kashnow

Meeting ended at 8:35 pm