



CITY OF BURLINGTON, VERMONT
CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT &
NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
c/o Community & Economic Development Office
City Hall, Room 32 • 149 Church Street • Burlington, VT 05401
802-865-7144 VOX • 802-865-7024 FAX • www.burlingtonvt.gov/cedo

Councilor Brian Pine, Chair, Ward 3
Councilor Sarah Carpenter, Ward 4
Councilor Zoraya Hightower, Ward 1

Committee members: Chair Brian Pine (BP), Sarah Carpenter (SC), Zoraya Hightower (ZH)

City staff: Christine Curtis, CEDO

Other Attendees: Christie Delphia, Stephen Marshall, Dan DeDom, Tom Proctor, Jessica Hyman, Sharon Bushor, Erhard Mahnke, Tara, Gene Bergman

Tuesday, November 10th, 2020

7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Approved 11/30 - Minutes

Meeting Started at 7:02 PM

1. Review Agenda

MOTION by Councilor Carpenter, SECOND by Councilor Hightower, to adopt the agenda as presented

VOTING: unanimous; motion carries.

2. Public Forum

Christie Delphia, Burlington Tenants Union, said that they find the exemptions unacceptable as they will create loopholes for landlords, and they will only agree to exempting “owner-occupied buildings.”

Stephen Marshall said that this document is not an ordinance but a charter change and that a third of the language is unnecessary. Marshall gave multiple suggestions for language changes.

Dan DeDom said they do not agree with the exemptions, and that the exemption for leases less than a year ignores the current reality for renters in Burlington, especially student housing. DeDom said this would create an incentive for landlords to rent to students and short-term leases.

Tom Proctor said that the exemption for “owner-occupied buildings” is fair, but many of the exemptions contain loopholes which could take a long time to repair, and cause real harm to Burlington tenants in the meantime, especially the “after a year” provision.

Jessica Hyman, Fair Housing Project at CVOEO, said they urge the committee to support a basic charter change, and exemptions can be discussed at a later time in the ordinance process, giving time to be sure that the needs of both tenants and landlords are met.

Sharon Bushor, former councilor, entered public forum but held their comment for landlord licensing agenda item.

Erhard Mahnke said they support the original language for just cause evictions, and understand the reasoning for including the exemption, but that they could be discussed at a later time.

Tara gave a personal testimony of the challenges of being threatened with eviction. They said they hope the language will be simple and easy to understand, and consistent with the original intentions of tenants’ rights.

Public forum closed with no further comments.

3. Continue discussion about potential exemptions for Just Cause Eviction charter change

Committee members discussed exemptions and Councilor Carpenter’s changes to the draft resolution. Councilor Pine asked for input on specifying “owner-occupied buildings” to “owner-occupied buildings with 3 or fewer units.” The committee discussed which landlords this would affect and how, as well as what state law already covers and any gaps an ordinance could fill and ultimately agreed on this exemption.

The committee also discussed the timeframe exemption. Councilor Pine said that many student leases in the area are “360 days” to allow landlords a 5 day turnover period, excluding many from just cause eviction under this provision. The committee did not reach agreement and decided to prepare an amendment and propose it to council on the 23rd.

4. Review landlord licensing resolution and determine what information is needed

Councilor Hightower began the discussion with an update from the Ordinance committee on a landlord licensing resolution, by saying they are evaluating what problems licensing would solve and what enforcement is currently available.

Sharon Bushor, former councilor, discussed their work on this topic from years past. Bushor said they worked with a state rep. who felt strongly that

landlord licensing should be considered and needs further exploration. Bushor said the current registration process costs the city a lot in terms of human resources when it comes to non-compliant businesses, and licensing would bring those businesses to compliance. Bushor said this would require a charter change to receive authority from the state.

Erhard Mahnke said they disagreed with landlord licensing and that the current registration process could be augmented to fit. Mahnke said that licensing would allow revocation which could harm tenants, and recommends other measures be considered before going to charter change.

Gene Bergman, former City Attorney, said that revocation is an issue under the current system, and there are compliance measures to help landlords that won't displace people and they should continue to investigate the topic.

Christie Delphia, Burlington Tenants Union, gave support for landlord licensing, and said it would allow for tenants to be able to do research on their landlords before signing a lease. Delphia said this issue was listed in the demands from the BTU.

Stephen Marshall said that for the sake of professionalism, businesses are required to have licenses because of the potential for harm, and that landlords should be included. Marshall said licensing gives the government the ability to hold bad landlords accountable, causing them to clean up or sell their properties.

The committee agreed they'd like to meet with the Ordinance committee to discuss the issue further.

5. Committee open forum

Councilor Pine went over the Accountability List for the Committee. The committee agreed that they should meet with the Joint Committee to work with their process, as opposed to starting fresh.

6. Approve Draft Minutes: 9/16, 10/8, 10/19, 10/21, 10/27

MOTION by Councilor Hightower, SECOND by Councilor Carpenter, to approve the Draft minutes as presented

VOTING: unanimous; motion carries.

7. Set date for next committee meeting

The Committee will meet on Monday, November 30th at 4 PM.

MOTION by Councilor Hightower SECOND by Councilor Carpenter to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 PM

VOTING: unanimous; motion carries.