

## Minutes

### Gresham Task Force on Housing

Wednesday, January 9, 2019 - 6:00 PM  
Gresham City Hall – Conference Center  
1333 NW Eastman Parkway – Gresham, OR 97030

#### Members Present:

Catherine Nicewood  
Cary Watters  
Scott Kilgo  
Jackie Bradford  
Michael Davis  
Jeff Edinger  
Deborah Olson  
Pamela Phan  
Richard Anderson  
Laura Bain Pramuk

#### Members Absent:

Teresa Carr  
Greg Knakal  
Travis Stovall  
Francisco Rodriguez

#### Staff Members Present:

Eric Schmidt, Dir. Community Development  
Erik Jensen, Facilitator, Jensen Strategies  
Teresa Hall, Staff Liaison

Rosalie Diaz, Recording Secretary

#### Council Liaisons Present:

Janine Gladfelter  
Mario Palmero

#### Visitors:

Eddy Morales  
David Widmark  
Jerry Hinton  
Silvia  
José  
Pilar  
Carol  
France  
Victor  
Elsa  
Trish  
Keith  
Randy

#### 1. Call to Order: Agenda Review/Updates

Erik Jensen called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

#### 2. Introductions: Adoption of November 11, 2018 Minutes

The following amendment per Cary Watters was made to the minutes:

*“Any policies established by the Task Force addresses the root causes of the housing crisis.”* A motion was made by Deborah Olson and seconded by Michael Davis to:

*“Approve the amended minutes for the November 11 Task Force on Housing Meeting”*

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

#### 3. Rental Inspection Presentation- Eric Schmidt

Eric Schmidt provided an overview of the City’s rental inspection program. The discussion included questions about when and how inspections are conducted, including timing, and follow up of items that are identified during inspections. Staff confirmed that the Rental Inspection Checklist is available online to view <https://greshamoregon.gov/Rental-Housing-Inspections/>. Questions included retribution issues

when renters request inspections, whether units are randomly selected and in quantified portions to maintain complaint anonymity. Staff clarified that the complaint process is being reviewed for areas of improvement, and that there is currently an ongoing discussion on how to follow up with property managers that will involve Council Policy Direction on this topic.

There were a number of additional questions regarding the inspection process and reporting. A member commented that there is a discrepancy amongst inspector reviews, where an inspector makes a list of issues to fix, and a second inspector will come up with a different list of issues to fix. Staff explained that there may be two types of inspectors involved such as housing inspectors and building inspectors, and that there should be service consistency to avoid confusion. Direction given to City inspectors is to address issues previously identified, and not necessarily add a new set of issues unless it's a life-threatening violation. Staff expressed interest in talking to the landlord. Another member mentioned an instance where an inspection request was made by a neighbor, and the inspector called the renter in front of the property management to address the request for inspection. It was confirmed that tenants receive a copy of the checklist, and that they may be present in their homes during the inspection. It was also confirmed that language services in English and Spanish can currently be provided by the City, and if other languages are needed, staff confirmed that there are language services available to interpret to residents. Currently Spanish interpretation is available in verbal form. Member reiterated the importance of tenants to understand what is going on in their homes. Staff explained that the code has many provisions and the stakeholder groups advised to focus on the basic living standards of homes being safe, habitable and up to date on fire safety codes which are all part of code. Staff confirmed that codes are cited on the checklist. A member mentioned the difficulty of a tenant to assert their rights if they don't know what exactly needs to be addressed. In addition, some residents are testifying that they're having a hard time getting their units fixed. When provided with the Rental Inspection Program number, some residents are afraid of calling the City because escalation of the issue or potential retaliation from their landlord which in this member's experience is common within 6 months after a repair is made. Staff was asked if inspectors keep track of retaliations against tenants within six months post-inspection, as well as tracking cases and post-inspection surveys. Staff confirmed that cases are tracked and interested in the suggestion of tracking retaliation. Staff confirmed that literature is provided regarding the Rental Inspection Program. A request was made for more reporting on the Inspection program, and evaluation for how repairs are getting made. Another member suggested the City develop brochures that goes along with the rental agreement, that owners are required to give to renters, and identify of the main areas that need regular follow-up, and information about the Rental Housing Inspection Program. This is to increase awareness of tenant rights, and for owners to know what is required by them as rental property owners. Staff mentioned that tenant and landlord forums are organized in collaboration with the Police Department a couple of times a year. A member gave feedback of how their experience with a rental inspection allowed good conversation with the landlord. Statistics on the program to look for areas of improvement was requested as well as the ratio of mandatory vs. complaint driven inspections. Staff confirmed that since the Rental Inspection Program was established, property violations are less egregious. It was shared that the Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT), the Portland Housing Bureau (PHB), and Multnomah County Environmental Health Department, partnered up to create the Safe Housing Project, where inspections are tenant-led; education about renter's rights is given as well as a 32-point inspection in homes so that tenants can understand what their health and safety responsibilities are. This has shown cooperation from landlords since it promotes the health of their properties. Staff clarified that there is a 1 to 2-day turnaround between the time that a tenant poses a complaint and when the inspection occurs. It was suggested to encourage education to tenants regarding requests and timelines of inspection processes.

#### **4. Task Force Process Update**

Information has been given to the Task Force and feedback has been shared by members internally. The Task Force can start assessing this collective knowledge to come up with recommendations for Council. The facilitator reiterated that City Council appointed the Task Force with the purpose to recommend approaches to address housing needs in the City of Gresham. The Task Force will come up with goals to strategies, and tools. Once outcomes are chosen and strategies are identified, what tools can be used, then recommendations will come from that.

#### **5. Task Force Discussion: Recommendation Criteria**

The Task Force was asked for specific goals of the Task Force. The following outcomes were suggested collectively by the Task Force:

- Stability- Ensuring families households and individuals can stay in their homes without being priced out without being unfairly and unlawfully evicted. This creates instability in the community.
- Opportunity and affordable safe-housing on all levels (i.e. low-income, mid-income, single nonelderly to elderly)
- Housing for all including low, middle and high-income households. Financial promotion for increase of employers and jobs.
- No concentration- Don't build ghettos of any kind; need a blend of everyone (poverty twice as concentrated in some school districts).
- Rental developments required to provide 20% of affordable housing units.
- Solutions that address root causes of the housing crisis; The Government Alliance on Racial Equity has great framework for addressing root causes through result-based accountability.
- Promoting housing as a means for social economic well-being as opposed to concentration of wealth and power.
- Innovation-Look at public and private partnerships, code regulation and policies, and programs to support Task Force goals/outcomes on policies.
- Balance among landlords, tenants, and developers on interest and policies (no need to hinder any one group).
- Options-Increasing supply
- Maintain Home Rule as much as possible regarding housing- Concept that cities have ability to set their own laws and policies outside of anything dictated by state or federal law.
  - Title 7 -Metro
- Education in landlord/tenant laws
  - Eviction notices are confused with actual evictions
  - Language barriers-Landlord/tenant law education in high schools because it includes legal aged people that can be bound to a contract legally.
- Investment strategies in the City
- Investment in residents of the City
- Incentivize developers and rental-housing owners

It was requested that the flip chart notes taken during the meeting be included in addition to the minutes as bullet points.

#### **6. Discussion: Strategies to Address Housing** Time constraint; moved on to Public Comment.

## **7. Public Comment**

Mesha: Implement a rental cap like that in Portland so that rent doesn't increase over a certain percentage.

Victor: Lived in Gresham since 2008 and rent has increased annually about 10%-12%. Consequently, he and his family moved to Fairview. Last year, Victor was paying \$1,200 and some of his neighbors were paying \$1,300. He noticed that Latino communities were paying more money (in rent) than American families. He decided to ask around and knock on doors to ask if other neighbors were experiencing a rent-increase crisis, they confirmed, and it was concluded that Americans are facing this (high rent) crisis as well. Within these kinds of conversations, it was noted that some folks were paying \$1,100 while others pay \$1,300. Victor described his experiences renting in Gresham. Victor's experience with the Gresham rental property management was that of no interest in repairs or improvements in the units. This rental property didn't have amenities such as playgrounds for children or a pool but charged the same amount as properties that do offer those amenities and other benefits. Investors are needed in the City who will take care of the families not just focus on their own profits. Victor expressed that he is tired and frustrated for himself, his family and his community and others in similar situations where their paycheck just covers their rent.

Keith: Lived in Oregon all his life and is 65 years old. He has a birth defect and has been on Section 8 housing for 20 years. Keith has lived in Gresham for the last 20 years because of high rents in Portland. For 11 years, he's lived in an apartment complex on Powell Boulevard that was sold to out-of-state investors. The property was then renovated and added amenities that the investors thought the residents wanted. Keith was then given an eviction and couldn't move for 6 months after the notice, because the Housing Authority (Home Forward) was dealing with Keith's move and situation as he became eligible for a caregiver. Keith worked with Home Forward. He was able to move back into his home in September of 2017 which is where he was residing up until today. However, he received an eviction notice from the rental property and now Keith has been looking for a new place in the last few months. Keith has been evicted as of this morning and had to take whatever he could with him.

Trish: Senior from Fairview and has been declared disabled in recent years. She used the last of her savings to put down on a manufactured home in Fairview in a manufactured home park. Her rent goes up every month, and although it isn't a lot, most of the residents there are seniors and are or are becoming disabled. She agrees with Victor that rent increases bother everyone. Trish has had community meetings with the park residents in the last year, once a month, to try to educate them about resources in the area. She pursued NW Pilot Project for possible rent subsidies and the Manufactured or "Mobile" Home Rent Assistance Program. Trish pursued safety, health, and welfare issues at the park, and has talked to people at the Fairview City Council and although they're working on improvements, Trish has been talking about these issues for more than two years. Trish would like to entertain the idea of a rent cap or rent control. She has exhausted the areas of rent subsidies and rent assistance organizations as far as she knows. She's talked about the Section 8 and Section 20 programs, and has reached out to Legal Aid, and hopes for a solution.

Gresham resident: Lives at Rockwood Station, her comment is regarding rental inspections. She said she didn't receive a copy of the inspection checklist, and when requested she was told that she could receive a copy from the office which wasn't provided there either. She isn't sure if her name is disclosed or if anonymity is maintained and fears potential retaliation. She mentioned that when one moves out of a unit and expects their deposit back, it is partial or not returned at all, and then the checklist surfaces. She loves her home and doesn't want to move because public transportation is close by as is a school and library. However, it's a dangerous area, deaths have occurred right outside her window to drug issues and is fearful of her own life safety.

Sylvia: Rent increases have impacted her family in the way that her husband works 13-14 hour shifts seven days a week and rarely does he work just five days a week. This limits his time to spend with the family all because rents are too high, and it keeps rising.

Elsa: Her family had to move last year, and her husband is frustrated because he's the one who pays the rent while Elsa takes care of their children. Her daughter is very upset because had to move to a different school she misses her friends that she's known since kindergarten. Elsa and her husband have been working to get their daughter to attend the school she had to change out of. Elsa had also begun working to help her husband pay their rent. However, she had a surgery two years ago and that stopped her from continuing to work and help her husband. She is now studying because she wants to improve her life. Moving to Fairview has been difficult to her family and they would like to move back to Gresham, so that her daughter can return to her original school.

Daughter: She had to change schools due to rent increases and moved to Fairview. She was accustomed to the stores and parks she is familiar with and found that moving to Fairview became a strain on her parents. She and her parents want rent increases to stop.

## **8. Next Steps/Adjourn**

Next meeting scheduled on February 6, 2019 at 6pm in the City Hall Conference Rooms 2A & 2B. Guest speaker, Richard Rothstein, author of "The Color of Law", will be talking via Skype. Follow up information requested will be captured will work to compile the information. Facilitator adjourned the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

## GRESHAM TASK FORCE ON HOUSING

JANUARY 9, 2019

### DISCUSSION NOTES: GOAL/STRATEGY CONCEPTS

The following ideas were offered by the Gresham Task Force on Housing for possible goals and strategies that will guide their recommendations. This list has not been synthesized or prioritized as final goals. It represents the ideas as presented at the meeting.

- Stability – Families have the ability to stay in their homes without eviction due to cost, etc.
- Affordability – at all levels of income/means
- Housing for all communities
- No concentrations of any type of housing – need a blend of housing types.
- Solutions that address the root causes of housing issues – (transformative)
- Promoting housing to address social/equity well-being – as opposed to concentrations of wealth and power
- Promote innovative ideas to address housing needs
- Public/private solutions
- Use public policy / regulations (as tools)
- Achieve balance of interests in coming up with solutions (e.g., residents / businesses / investors) ensuring growth
  - Create a balance in Gresham housing
    - Residents – are able to buy or rent what they prefer for housing
    - Investors are able to buy for the long-term
    - Developers are motivated to build
- Protect Home Rule in relation to housing – avoid pre-emption
- Education – resident / landlords / stakeholders
- Invest in the community – both people and places
- Manage supply to meet the need
- Develop an investment strategy for the City – with priorities
- Incentivize the market to achieve housing goals
- 20 % of affordable housing with each development
- Compliance with Title VII