

**MINUTES
HOUSING COMMISSION
City of Falls Church**

PURPOSE OF MEETING: *The five-member Commission is appointed by the City Council for three-year terms. The Housing Commission maintains awareness of housing needs and opportunities, including affordable housing; proposes housing policy initiatives and changes; investigates fair housing complaints and conciliates these complaints; mediates conflicts relating to the Virginia Residential Landlord & Tenant Act and offers reconciliatory services in conflicts relating to other housing laws.*

DATE OF MEETING: January 14, 2020

PLACE OF MEETING: Oak Room – City Hall

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY: Chair Brenda Heffernan at 6:30pm

THOSE PRESENT:

<p><u>Commission Members</u> Brenda Heffernan, Chair <u> X </u> Jordan Hicks, Vice Chair <u> X </u> M.T. Gutmanis <u> </u> Joshua Shokoor <u> X </u> Peter Davis <u> X </u> <u>FCHC Liaison</u> Thom Vaccaro <u> </u> <u>Council Liaison</u> Letty Hardi <u> X </u></p>	<p><u>Staff</u> Dana Lewis <u> X </u> David Huaman <u> X </u> <u>Planning Commission Liaison</u> <u>Student Liaison</u> Kaylee Stillwagoner <u> </u> <u>Guest</u></p>
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Minutes approved from the December meeting were approved

Proceedings:

Meeting called to order by Chair Heffernan at 6:33 PM

New Business

Merrill House – A group of tenants (14 residents) from Merrill House voiced their concerns about rising utility bills. The group of tenants range from all ages and all household compositions. Tenants are billed through Con Services, which compiles all the utilities together, not providing a detailed breakdown of the bill. Tenants have stated that Aimco, the Property Management, has referred tenants to view their bills online. One tenant saw an increase in utilities, regardless of having the thermostat off. It is also important to note that none of the units have a washer or dryer.

Tenants stated that around 50% of the utility bill is from water and sewage. For the month of December one tenant was charged \$240 for water and sewage (3-bedroom unit). According to

tenants, Property Management has fallen silent on the issue or provides generic emails. One tenant stated they had the following utility bill for December in the past four years:

Dec. 2016 - \$299

Dec. 2017 - \$340

Dec. 2018 - \$406

Dec. 2019 - \$426

Tenants have tried to post flyers to raise this concern with other tenants with the sudden surge of prices, but they stated that flyers were taken down by the property manager.

Some tenants have filed a complaint to the Better Business Bureau.

Concerns were raised about leaks in the pool in the property, tenants were apparently informed by the property manager that the City would be coming to were checking for possible air leaks.

The Housing Commission requested that the residents compile a list of their utilities and send the complete list to them. This will allow the HC to have documentation and data of the spike in utilities.

The Housing Commission will request that AMICO come to the next meeting and break down the bill by the dollar (usage and rate).

Tenants were provided information for Northern Virginia Legal Services.

Status of Affordable Housing Report – City Staff, David Huaman, presented the Annual Affordable Housing Report. The Housing Commission made suggestions to change the graphic for the cost burden chart. They also recommended to include the Homeownership ADU properties with their expiration date. A suggestion was made to change the language for the Housing Stock table to reflect the 2012 goals.

Old Business

The Fields Apartments Tenant Concerns – A Fields resident, voiced the concerns of other Fields residents. Some residents are hesitant to voice their concerns due to immigration status or any other type of repercussions they may face. A school parent group has met at the TJ Elementary school faculty on the issues of mice, lead, and mold. It was shared that the property management only renovates vacant properties not occupied units. They have also begun to work with CASA. There is photo evidence of mice being in the building. The resident stated that there is mold, the walls are not insulated, and there is some flooding in the bottom floors. They stated one resident had a sewage flood and the unit's carpets and walls were washed but not replaced. The Housing Commission would like to staff to review the Landlord Tenant Act on this complaint and contact Code Enforcement as well as the Health department.

Housing Consultant and the Community Impact Grant VHDA Update – City Staff, Dana Lewis, gave updates on the RFQs that are being put out for both projects. The Cash in Lieu study

is expected to have a 30-60 day turn around until completion. The VHDA Housing Study is to include at-risk properties.

Commission Member Recruitment – Hicks

Jordan will serve as interim Chair. Recruits will potentially come from Merrill House or the Fields.

The Housing Commission will draft a letter of tenant issues for council.

The Housing Commission will explore the option of creating a subcommittee for tenants.

A priority for the Housing Commission this year is the ADU homeownership covenants.

Sprague Liaison Report – Nothing was reported.

Adjourned – 8:30 pm