

**CITY OF NORWALK  
FAIR RENT COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - FEBRUARY 4, 2026  
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

**ATTENDEES:** Fran Collier-Clemmons (Chair), Lunise Constant (Vice Chair). J Hanson Guest, Ms. Oliver, Ms. Penn-Williams, Tatiana Santiago, Johnnie Mae Weldon, Peter Halladay.

**STAFF:** Russell Liskov (Commission Attorney), Carlos Duque (Fair Rent Coordinator), Keenan McMahon (Community Services Director).

**OTHERS:** Tamar Friedman.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The regular meeting of the Fair Rent Commission was called to order at 7:33 p.m. by Chair Collier-Clemmons.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Roll call was taken and a quorum was established.

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

**A. Regular Meeting: January 7, 2026**

Several corrections to the January 7, 2026, minutes were noted, including formatting of attendee names, proper identification of Chair Collier-Clemmons as Vice Chair at the time of the prior meeting, correction of Mr. Guest's name (removing hyphenation).

**\*\*MR. GUESTT MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 7, 2026, REGULAR MEETING WITH THE CORRECTIONS AS NOTED.**

**\*\*MS. WELDON SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE MINUTES WERE ACCEPTED AS CORRECTED.**

**IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ms. Tamar Friedman, a Norwalk resident and social work student, stated she was observing the meeting for a class and had no comments or motions to offer.

There being no further public comment, public participation was closed.

## V. REPORTS

### **A. Chair's Report**

Chair Collier-Clemmons delivered her inaugural report as Chair. She thanked the s for electing her to the position and acknowledged the service of former Chair John Church. She stated that she did not actively seek the role but accepted the responsibilities and looked forward to working with the s and staff. She emphasized the Commission's commitment to fairness and adherence to state and city regulations.

She reported that an email inquiry regarding a fair rent claim, previously forwarded from former Chair Mr. Church, had been resolved through contact by Human Services Director Keenan McMahon and staff.

Chair Collier-Clemmons identified a key priority as addressing the Mayor's appointments to fill vacancies and transitioning alternate members to regular status in accordance with the City Charter.

### **B. Coordinator's Report**

Mr. Duque provided an update on his activities over the prior 30 days, including assistance provided to 41 families with inquiries. Many inquiries involved repeated contacts from the same households and concerned lack of heat and/or hot water during the recent cold weather. He reported efficient responses from Norwalk Department of Health housing inspectors, with no cases escalated to Housing Court.

He further reported on a significant pipe burst incident at a local property (Halstead) that displaced several families for approximately ten days. The property management company informed affected tenants that they could break their leases without penalty if desired. Mr. Duque assisted several families in understanding their rights, the relocation process, and procedures for requesting security deposit returns.

During the discussion of this incident, Ms. Penn-Williams raised concerns about several displaced families currently residing at the Even Hotel who reported having no money to purchase food. She questioned why the Red Cross had not been called to provide food assistance, noting that the Red Cross typically assists in such situations. She stated that a resident informed her the pipe had been leaking for a month prior to the break, with a garbage can placed to catch the water, but no repairs were made until the pipe burst during the storm.

Ms. Penn-Williams reported that she contacted the Chief of Staff, Lamond, and was referred to Ken, who directed a family to a shelter for food, which she described as unacceptable. She expressed strong disapproval of the city's response, particularly given that some displaced residents have children and no means to prepare meals at the hotel. She indicated she had directed one family to Shiloh Baptist Church for food that evening and noted that First Congregational Church on the Green would provide food on Friday. She stated her intention to seek additional resources and expressed frustration that the situation was not being adequately addressed despite residents paying high rents.

Mr. Duque responded that conversations were ongoing among the Health Department, Fire Department, Emergency Management, the Mayor's Office, and the Community Services Department. He confirmed that the question about Red Cross involvement had been raised, and the response received was that the incident did not qualify as an emergency such as a fire.

Ms. Penn-Williams reiterated that the situation was comparable to a fire, especially given that residents were displaced, unable to return to their apartments (initially projected for February 9, later extended to February 22), and unable to cook in the hotel. Ms. Oliver and Ms. Weldon expressed agreement that the response was unacceptable, particularly with children involved and residents facing food insecurity.

Ms. Oliver questioned whether the city could arrange temporary food assistance with reimbursement to be sought later from the property management company (Halstead).

Ms. Penn-Williams stated that Chief of Staff, Lamond, indicated the city's only obligation was to cover hotel costs, with plans to pursue reimbursement from the property management company.

Mr. Liskov explained that relocation benefits are typically governed by state statutes and any local ordinances. He noted that cities generally cover relocation costs (such as hotel stays) and then seek reimbursement from the responsible landlord, with potential liens or foreclosure actions if repayment is not made. He suggested that the Red Cross distinction between fire and water damage was a Red Cross policy issue and recommended contacting them directly to inquire about possible assistance for water damage situations.

Mr. Duque reported that his supervisor, Keenan McMahon, had just joined the meeting and could provide further information.

Keenan McMahon clarified that she had not spoken directly with Ms. Penn-Williams the previous day; the conversation was likely with one of the department's navigators. She informed the Commission that special arrangements had been made with Person to Person in Darien specifically for Halstead residents displaced for an extended period. These arrangements allow more frequent access to food assistance than the standard once-per-month protocol, with accommodations for residents unable to travel or prepare meals. Residents are instructed to identify themselves as Halstead-impacted individuals to receive these adjusted services. Keenan McMahon stated she was unaware of the specific Red Cross criteria distinguishing fire from water damage but acknowledged it appeared to be based on the organization's internal definitions.

Chair Collier-Clemmons summarized the Red Cross question as concerning the difference in treatment between water and fire as disasters.

Ms. Penn-Williams reiterated her view that a flooded apartment constitutes a disaster and expressed ongoing dissatisfaction with the city's overall handling of the situation, particularly for a family with five children who had lost their husband several years earlier.

Keenan McMahon committed to immediately emailing Mr. Duque with detailed information about the Person-to-Person arrangements and her direct contact information (including her work cell phone number) so that Commissioners could share it with any residents who reach out for assistance. She encouraged residents to contact her directly with questions or concerns.

Chair Collier-Clemmons concluded the discussion by stating that each resident's situation is unique and that the Fair Rent Commission can serve as a conduit to direct affected individuals to appropriate resources and follow up with relevant organizations to ensure assistance is provided. She thanked Keenan McMahon for the information and Ms. Penn-Williams for raising the concerns. She instructed that any contacted by residents should forward them to the provided resources through the coordinator.

## **VI. REVIEW, DISCUSSION, AND MOTIONS ON OPEN CASES**

Mr. Liskov, Commission Counsel, presented the status of each open case. Mr. Duque displayed the relevant case information on the shared screen for the Commissioners.

### **A. 1862-25 41 Wolfpit Avenue, Apartment 4K**

Mr. Liskov reported that this matter involved a complaint at 41 Wolfpit Avenue, Apartment 4K. He stated that this was the case of which he was most proud, as he had successfully facilitated a full resolution between the landlord and the tenant. In addition to resolving the Fair Rent Commission complaint, the settlement also resulted in the conclusion of two related Superior Court cases by judgment.

He informed the Commission that the tenant had filed and signed a formal withdrawal of the complaint. Mr. Liskov recommended that the Commission vote to close the case.

**\*\*MS. OLIVER MOVED TO CLOSE CASE 1862-25.**

**\*\*MR. HALLADAYSECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. CASE 1862-25 WAS CLOSED.**

### **B. 1871-2510 Willard Road, Apartment 206**

Mr. Liskov reported that the landlord had proposed increasing the rent from \$2,318 per month to \$2,434 per month. He noted that the tenant had vacated the apartment. Mr. Liskov stated that he personally met the tenant the previous day as she was leaving the building and described her as a lovely individual. The tenant had submitted a signed withdrawal of her complaint. He recommended that the Commission vote to close the case.

**\*\*MS. OLIVER MOVED TO CLOSE CASE 1871-25.**

**\*\*MR. GUEST SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. CASE 1871-25 WAS CLOSED.**

**C. 1875-25 34 Bartlett Avenue, Apartment 1**

Mr. Liskov reported that the landlord sought to increase the rent from \$1,400 per month to \$2,000 per month. He stated that the landlord and tenant had successfully negotiated and mutually agreed upon a new rent amount.

Messages and mail had been sent to the tenant to confirm the resolution, but the tenant had not yet responded. Mr. Liskov anticipated that a new lease reflecting the agreed rent would be executed in the near future, at which point the case could be closed. He therefore recommended that the Commission take no action on the matter at this meeting.

**\*\*MS. OLIVER MOVED TO TAKE NO ACTION ON CASE 1875-25.**

**\*\*MS. WELDON SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. NO ACTION WAS TAKEN ON CASE 1875-25.**

**D. 1876-25 One Glover Avenue, Apartment 222**

Mr. Liskov reported that the landlord proposed increasing the rent from \$2,993 per month to \$3,172 per month. He stated that active negotiations had been ongoing and that he had spoken with the landlord the previous day. The landlord had extended an offer that Mr. Liskov believed would satisfy the tenant. However, there had not yet been sufficient time to communicate and confirm the offer with the tenant.

Mr. Liskov expressed confidence that the matter would likely be resolved prior to the next meeting and therefore recommended that the Commission take no action at this time.

**\*\*MS. OLIVER MOVED TO TAKE NO ACTION ON CASE 1876-25.**

**\*\*MR. HALLADAYSECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. NO ACTION WAS TAKEN ON CASE 1876-25.**

Mr. Liskov thanked the Commission for their attention to the open cases. Chair Collier-Clemmons thanked Mr. Liskov for his report and work on the matters.

**VII. PRESENTATION OF NEW CASES**

Mr. Liskov reported that there were no new cases to present.

**VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

Ms. Oliver raised a question regarding a prior case involving Ms. Diana Rovaes. She described ongoing issues at the property, including lack of heat and water during a recent cold snap, and asked whether Ms. Rovaes would have recourse to return to the Commission if issues persisted.

Mr. Liskov explained that the tenant would need to file a new complaint unless the landlord's actions constituted retaliation. He noted that a new rent increase notice had been sent and anticipated the matter might return to the Commission.

## **IX. NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Duque noted that two formal complaint withdrawals had been received and were included as attachments in the email sent to s (not included on the public agenda due to privacy considerations).

Ms. Penn-Williams announced that the Norwalk NAACP would host a “Bingo with a Twist” event on Saturday, March 21, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the community room, 11 Belden Avenue. The event is for ages 21 and up with a \$50 admission fee.

## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\*PETER HALLADAY MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

**\*\*MS. PENN-WILLIAMS SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Courtney Baldwin  
Recording Secretary