CITY OF NORWALK
FAIR RENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 3, 2009

ATTENDANCE: Patricia Genuario, Chair; Martin Bernard, Wendell Simms, Jr.; Brenda Penn-Williams; Fran Collier-Clemmons, Mary Geake, Jeannett Jean-Pierre (7:42 p.m.)

STAFF: Adam Bovilsky, Director; Lawrence Patterson, Field Representative

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Genuario called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

April 2009 Minutes

The following corrections were noted:

Page 1, Under **STAFF**: please change "Adam Bovilsky, Human Relations Director;" to "Adam Bovilsky, Director;"

Page 4, "**In the News**" heading: please change "**In the News**" to "**In the News:**"

Ms. Jean-Pierre joined the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

**** MR. BERNARD MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF APRIL 2009 MEETING AS CORRECTED.**
**** MR. SIMMS SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Ms. Genuario then read the following report into the record:

> Good evening and as always, I wish to thank the Commissioners for attending this evening. I believe we have several items of business to attend to and am hopeful that we can make this a fairly short meeting.

As you are aware, the position of Field Representative for the Human Relations and Fair Rent Commissions, which was scheduled to be defunded, has now been funded and Adam will further address this situation in his Director's Report.

Having no further comments at this time, I will ask Adam to present his report. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Genuario, Chair

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Bovilsky then presented the following report to the Commission:

Statistics:

The office has 63 intakes during the month of April, 53 of which related to Fair Rent. We had 69 intakes during the month of May, 58 of which were related to Fair Rent. We had 346 follow up contacts in April, 182 of which were related to Fair Rent. We had 372 follow up contacts during the month of May, 210 of which were related to Fair Rent. One formal complaint was filed with each Commission in May.

Commission Members and Department Staff:

Six commissioners' terms will expire on July 1. Mayor Moccia is aware of these terms expirations.

Budget:

I am happy to report that the NMEA has voted to make concessions to keep five currently filled NMEA positions that were at risk of being defunded. Although the Common Council still needs to vote on whether to accept the proposal, it appears likely that we will keep our Field Representative position full time. I have attached the Board of Estimate and Taxation's approved budget for our Department (which does not include the Field Representative's position). Please note the reductions in typing services and the cutting of our business expenses and seminars & conference fees budget lines. However, all departments had their seminar and conference line items cut and we were able to make requests for specific conferences and training for our staff.

In the News:

On top of your news packet is an article on the National Low Income Housing Coalition's determination that the Stamford-Norwalk area has the least affordable rental housing in the country. I have reviewed their data which is available publicly and attached a few key findings to this report. Of particular interest to this Commission is how they determine the market rents, something we are, of course, charged with doing on a regular basis.

In addition, I have enclosed articles and an editorial on Governor Rell's proposal to close the Norwalk Court House. I believe that there are significant repercussions on the rental population, landlords and tenants, which this Commission should be aware of.

Finally, I have also enclosed articles on the budget and union concession, and on some interesting housing articles and foreclosure articles in the papers from the last couple of months related to Norwalk and Stamford.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Bovilsky

Mr. Bovilsky then directed everyone's attention to the budget breakout and said that it did not include the wages, Wages Overtime and Longevity figures because the budget had not been finalized by the Council. The figure for the typing services has been reduced because of the budget constraints, but in the event that the typing service is needed, funds will be transferred.

Ms. Genuario asked about the line item for Other Contractual Services, which Mr. Bovilsky explained could include a variety of consulting services but was likely to be used for outside legal services including the review of an ADA Transition Plan. Ms. Genuario asked about Other Operating Supplies. Mr. Bovilsky explained that this covers the rental of the office copiers. This contract is handled by Purchasing and the toner is also included in the contract.

Mr. Bovilsky then distributed packets of information about the Fair Market Rent. He said that while he would give a brief overview of the information, that the Commissioners should review the extensive material at home.

Mr. Bovilsky said that while it was important to know what HUD is doing, it is also important to be aware of what the Housing Authority is doing. He then directed everyone's attention to a November 21, 2008 letter from Mr. John Hinson, the Director of

Housing Operations for the City of Norwalk Housing Authority. Mr. Bovilsky said that currently, the Commission is using the rental listings, but those are not broken out by neighborhood. HUD actually works to place Section 8 participants in all neighborhoods and in order to do this, the Housing Authority has a two tiered system for the various neighborhoods based on location.

Mr. Bovilsky said the newspaper article was a good place to start culling information for the Commission in order to become more informed on the housing costs. He also pointed out that some of the information came from a low income advocacy group, The National Low Income Housing Coalition.

Mr. Bovilsky said that there is a newspaper article included in the packets about Governor Rell's desire to close the Norwalk Courthouse. He explained that many of the local residents are at the Courthouse for tenant/landlord issues. Mr. Bovilsky said that the Mayor was very concerned about this and would be speaking to Governor Rell about this issue.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to discuss at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Martinez has sent out invitations to the Commissioners for the Annual Dinner at O'Neill's. It will be $25.00 per person.

Ms. Genuario said that the film "Brick by Brick" had been shown earlier in the day. Mr. Bovilsky said that he had been able to attend and that the Fair Housing had been able to secure the rights to show the film publicly. When additional showings are scheduled, Mr. Bovilsky will notify all the Commissioners.

Mr. Bovilsky then announced that there would be a Free Landlord Seminar on June 11, 2009. He then reviewed the two types of Section 8 programs. One is tied to a set project or location while the other one can be used nationwide, as long as the tenant does not violate the terms of the Section 8 voucher. Mr. Simms had several questions about landlords turning down Section 8 tenants. Mr. Patterson said that there had been situations in the past when a potential tenant contacted the Fair Rent Department because they believed that they were denied because they were Section 8. These situations are usually investigated by Ms. Suib of the Redevelopment Agency.

Mr. Patterson said that he would be attending a Seminar next Friday about Housing in Connecticut with Secretary of State Bysiewicz at Anthony's Ocean View. He added that

the department has been very busy with diversity training citywide. He said that the feedback from this training was that the training was very well received.

REVIEW, DISCUSSION AND MOTIONS ON OPEN CASES

Case #1592-09

Mr. Patterson gave a brief update on the case and recommended that it be closed.

**** MS. COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO CLOSE CASE #1592-09.**
**** MR. BERNARD SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

PRESENTATION OF NEW CASES

Case #1593-09

Mr. Patterson gave a brief update on the case and informed the Commissioners that the reason that the complaint has been filed was due to several repairs that needed to be made. The landlord made the needed repairs, but the tenant decided to move elsewhere. He then recommended that the case not be heard.

**** MR. BERNARD MOVED NOT TO HEAR CASE #1593-09.**
**** MR. SIMMS SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. COLLIER-CLEMMONS MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
**** MR. SIMMS SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services