

**CITY OF NORWALK
FAIR RENT COMMISSION
MARCH 4, 2009**

ATTENDANCE: Patricia Genuario, Chair; John Church, "Vice-Chair", Mary Geake; Richard Stumpf; Stacy Parrigin; Maria Borges-Lopez; Martin Bernard; Brenda Penn-Williams (7:50).

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by the Chair.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chair read her written report:

Good evening and thank you for attending tonight. As you know, the Fair Rent Commission has not called a regular meeting since November 5, 2008. Consequently, the December, January and February meetings were not held. The reasoning behind this is that we have not had sufficient business to attend to and all matters brought to the Commission have been handled by our capable staff. I feel it is unnecessary to hold a meeting when it is not needed and I hope you all agree with me.

I called a Special Meeting on February 18, 2009 to discuss the 2009-2010 Departmental Budget.

In December, our summer intern Anne Benfield held Focus Groups at the Norwalk Library.

Also in December, it was the 60th Anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was celebrated here in the City Hall atrium, along with the "World Wide Evergreen" tree and ornaments.

On February 24, 2009, there was a dedication of room 231 named "Bea Brown Memorial Room" in honor of Bea Brown", who was a long standing member of the Human Relations Commission. This room is the one where we most often hold our meetings.

On Monday evening there was a Board of Estimate and Taxation meeting which our Director, Adam Bovilsky, attended and will comment on. I also have quite a number of

newspaper articles regarding the budget if you missed them are interested in reading them.

I have no further business at this time and ask that Adam give you his Director's Report.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Genuario, Chair

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

NOVEMBER 2008

The following correction was made: The spelling of Ms. Parrigin's name was corrected under "Attendance" and throughout the body of the minutes.

**** MR. BERNARD MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 5, 2008, AS CORRECTED.**

**** MR. STUMPF SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENTION (GEAKE).**

FEBRUARY 2009

The following corrections were made:

On page 1, under "Attendance", "Vice Chair" was added after John Church's name. In the second paragraph, 1st sentence, "recommended" was added after "2009-10". In the third paragraph, 1st sentence, "or ten" was deleted. The second sentence was rewritten to read as follows: "On the issue of retirement, 58 employees are eligible for early retirement, 14 of whom are in positions currently being defunded. Six positions which are currently being defunded are not eligible for early retirement." The next sentence should end after "position", and the following sentence was deleted. "Fair Rent Department" was corrected to "Fair Rent Commission" throughout the minutes. In the 4th paragraph, 2nd sentence, "city" was corrected to "City's". On page 2, 1st paragraph, "the spelling of Ms. Borges-Lopez's name was corrected, and "Larry" was corrected to "Mr. Patterson". In the 2nd paragraph, 3rd sentence, "for" was changed to "of". In the 4th paragraph, "a reduction by" was added after "only" and "a 50% reduction in programmatic staff" was added after "actuality" and the rest of the sentence was deleted. The next sentence should read "The defunding of positions would result in a drastic cut in services not required by State or City codes." In the next sentence, "that" was added after "stated", and "the defunding of" was changed to "of defunding the". The next sentence was deleted. In the 4th paragraph, , 1st sentence, "go" was corrected to "do". In the 2nd sentence, "mayor, finance and personnel" was corrected to "Mayor, Finance Director and Personnel Director".

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At 7:50 p.m., Ms. Penn-Williams arrived at the meeting.

- ** MR. BERNARD MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 18, 2009, AS CORRECTED.**
- ** MS. GEAKE SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Bovilsky reviewed his report:

Statistics:

I want to report on a comparison of the first six months of this fiscal year (July through December, 2008) with the same period last fiscal year. The number of intakes and follow-up contacts have both increased. Fair Rent related intakes have increased 5% (from 378 to 395) and Human Relations related intakes have increase 27%. Similarly, our follow-up contacts have substantially increased. Our Fair Rent related follow-up contacts have increased 6%, (from 1449 to 1530) and our Human Relations related follow-up contacts have increased 77%. The increase in intakes and contacts is likely due to an increase in referred cases from Norwalk's NAACP chapter, the Norwalk Housing Authority, NEON, and the Housing Court. I believe the service providers in these agencies have a growing knowledge of our Commission's work. Although these statistics do not fully represent all of the department's work, these numbers do indicate that we have had a busy six months.

Last week one formal complaint was filed with the Fair Rent Commission.

Commission Members and Department Staff: We have no vacancies on the staff or Commission.

Budget:

I met with the Mayor, Finance Director, and Personnel Director in private and then again, publicly, in front of the Board of Estimate and Taxation. The administration and Board of Estimate and Taxation understand the challenges facing our department with the recommended defunding of the Field Representative position in the 2009-10 recommended budget. They also understand that some services our department currently offers will have to be reduced. However, the administration is still recommending this position be defunded.

In the News:

In addition to the articles on the budget, please also see the article from yesterday (*The Hour*, March 3, 2009, "Bill Threatens Property Rights of Evicted Tenants") on proposed legislation to do away with the requirement that cities store evicted tenants' belongings for 15 days following a lawful eviction. Our office had 199 inquiries on evictions last year and 105 in the first six months of this year. The Health Department reports that so far this fiscal year (the last 8 months) they have received residential tenants' property from

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marshals on 58 occasions (not including the large number of cases in which the tenants leave prior to the date the marshal comes to their door).

Mr. Bovilsky said that the issue of compliance enforcement for Redevelopment projects in the City has been mentioned by the Mayor as another responsibility for his department. However, this might be an issue with the staff reduction being contemplated.

Mr. Bernard said that Legal Services is supposed to be set up at NEON and asked if that would help Fair Rent. Mr. Bovilsky responded that Attorney Heisler has set up an office in the former Ben Franklin school, but he is not associated with Connecticut Legal Services.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

REVIEW, DISCUSSION AND MOTIONS ON ACTIVE CASES

CASE #1589-08

Mr. Patterson reviewed this case and recommended it be closed.

- ** MR. CHURCH MOVED TO CLOSE CASE #1589-08.**
- ** MS. BORGES-LOPEZ SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PRESENTATION OF NEW CASES

CASE #1592-09

Mr. Patterson reviewed this case and recommended that it be heard.

- ** MR. BERNARD MOVED TO HEAR CASE #1592-09.**
- ** MR. STUMPF SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

MOTION TO ADJOURN

- ** MR. CHURCH MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** MS. GEAKE SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Telesco
Telesco Secretarial Services

