

LANDLORD-TENANT RELATIONS BOARD
Wednesday, September 6, 2023 – 7:00 P.M.
301 King Street, Chet and Sabra Avery Conference Room
Alexandria, VA 22314
APPROVED MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Bonnie Naugle at 7:05 p.m. Board members, guests, and staff introduced themselves.

A. BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Bonnie Naugle, Vice Chair Elijah St. Dennis, Members Olivia Jenkins, Amber Pendergrass, James Axelrod, Katherine O’Connell

B. BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Geri Baldwin, Elliott Waters

C. STAFF PRESENT: Melodie Seau

D. GUESTS PRESENT: Kara Coughlin, Liz Achuff, Ross Matzkin-Bridger, Carlyle Place Tenant Association

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA: The agenda was approved unanimously on a motion by Elijah St. Dennis, seconded by Olivia Jenkins.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

No members of the public were present to comment.

4. CARLYLE PLACE TENANT ASSOCIATION: Kara Coughlin, Liz Achuff, and Ross Matzkin-Bridger, with the Carlyle Place Tenant Association introduced themselves. Mr. Matzkin Bridger discussed issues with the elevators that have been ongoing. When elevators are out of service, since the stairwell doors are always locked, people are trapped inside or outside of their apartments.

Ms. Coughlin said that there are frequent water outages, some for over 24 hours. When there is no water, the air conditioners in the building do not work. There are ongoing renovations in vacant units during which tile floors and carpets are removed generating constant noise which interferes with people working from home, children napping, and disrupting the sleep schedules for residents who work alternative schedules and need to sleep during the day.

Ms. Achuff noted that there have been several flooding incidents. In April an appliance fire caused the sprinklers to activate, flooding 15 floors in one tier of the building. There are frequent leaks and flooding in the gym, which attracts insects and renders the gym unusable.

In addition to disrupting conditions, residents are receiving excessive rent increases of up to 14%, ignoring the City’s Voluntary Rent Increase guidelines which recommend no more than a 5% increase annually. In response to a concern from Mr. Matzkin-Bridger, Melodie Seau said that the City does monitor the increases for residents in the City’s affordable rental set aside program to ensure that those residents’ rents do not increase more than 5%.

Residents were most concerned about communication from management. They often do not receive notices of work, and even when the notices are sent, the schedules change and residents aren't notified of the changes. When residents ask questions, they often get different answers from different staff members. People to whom the residents were directed in corporate have not been helpful. In response to communication from the tenant association, Paradigm sent a notice to all residents and the response did not address the concerns raised. Management and corporate have refused to recognize or meet with the tenant association.

Ms. Jenkins suggested using the City's 311 system for complaints and posting concerns on review sites. Ms. Jenkins also suggested focusing on communication with the regional manager, Kelly Rimm, who would be responsible for hiring staff for the property.

Vice Chair St. Dennis said that professionally he prepares schedules for corporate window cleaning. He said there needs to be communication between the schedulers, contractors, and property managers because issues arise, and schedules need to be changed. Vice Chair St. Dennis said that what needs to be fixed is the communication between the property staff and the residents. Ms. Seau said that the Board could possibly encourage Kelly Rimm to hold a resident meeting. Mr. St. Dennis suggested that starting with the communication issues makes sense.

5: APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF JUNE 7, 2023: Ms. Seau apologized that the minutes were not completed and asked that the approval be deferred to October.

6. ANNUAL REPORT: The annual report was approved with amendments which will be submitted by the Chair.

7. LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Ms. Seau presented the Eviction Prevention Task Force legislative recommendations. These include limits on attorney's fees, transparency with fees in the lease, payment plans, and increase the pay or quit notice from five days to 14 days. Also recommended is a standard lease with translations into languages spoken by a large percentage of tenants in the area or building.

The Board agreed unanimously to support the housing stabilization recommendations (in theory) made by the Eviction Prevention Task Force on a motion by Mr. St. Dennis, seconded by Jamie Axelrod.

Vice Chair St. Dennis also moved to recommend reform of the RUBS system by allowing local monitoring and creating stable formulas, and defining enforcement to ensure that utility costs are reasonable and transparent to tenants. Amber Pendergrass seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

8. OLD BUSINESS: No new business.

9. NEW BUSINESS: No old business.

9. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.