

APPROVED

**STAMFORD SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2013
MAYOR'S CONFERENCE ROOM – 10TH FLOOR
STAMFORD GOVERNMENT CENTER
888 WASHINGTON BOULEVARD
STAMFORD, CT 06901**

ATTENDEES: Moira Colangelo, Sharona Cowan, Ted Jankowski, Steve Kolenberg, Kate Lombardo, Nancy Munoz and Sandra Peterkin

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Sandra Peterkin, Co-Chair of the Social Services Commission at 4:08 p.m.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The September minutes were approved unanimously.

III. SHARONA COWAN, DIRECTOR OF MANDATED SERVICES – TO PROVIDE UPDATE ON FAIR RENT CASES

As the commission members suggested at the September meeting, Sharona included a brief description of each case. She is still expecting information from complainants and waiting for parties to come to an agreement. If they do not agree, they will be placed on next month's agenda. Moira asks, "Do you have people who put in a complaint and don't come back?" Sharona states that although some individuals are hesitant and/or need assistance; she gives them the information and lets them decide. She adds that a seasonal worker has been helping her with the application process. The commission members agree that it is necessary to make sure there are no barriers so complainants follow through the process. The problem that arises is who will read the forms if they are completed in Spanish or Creole. It may be possible that there are agencies in the City of Stamford that are willing to help the commission with this service.

Moira suggests the commission begin to look at their other responsibilities and work them into their agenda. Further, she feels that there are many non-profit agencies that can help the commission.

IV. PROGRESS OF FACT SHEET BROCHURES

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Sandra indicated that the group had discussed during last month meeting about designing a Fact Sheet containing the commission's functions. She adds that Kate recommended placing the Fact Sheet in the lobby's bulletin board and distributing it to neighborhood associations. She asked the group whether they should go ahead and design one or if there was a Fact Sheet done in the past. The question arose if Stamford has rent control like New York. Ted added that Vikki Cooper, Deputy Corporation Counsel confirmed that Stamford does not have rent control. Sandra concurred that there is no rent control. Moira questioned that aside from what is on the website, what other things are done by the City. Ted explained that all the information is on the City website. Sandra urges the group to visit the website to browse and to learn about Fair Rent. Further, she reminds the group that they also are responsible for the discrimination aspect. Moira reminds the group that there are people who do not have access to computer. For this reason, the commission can get information directly to non-profits agencies. Kate insists that word of mouth is very powerful. Moira agrees that those seeking information can go to non-profit agencies which will allow for the word to spread. Kate explains that the resources for the disadvantaged are different. For example, many individuals may use the library, laundromats, supermarkets even the Government Center lobby when they come for flu shots or the WIC program. Ted thinks that the commission members are thinking too much ahead and that they should focus on the four Fair Rent cases that have not been addressed. Sandra affirms that the commission has been working on the Fair Rent issues. Nonetheless, Ted asked the group to attempt on discussing how they will address the Fair Rent cases at the same time they are promoting the commission functions to the public. For instance, he was counting on Dan attending the meeting to use his expertise on getting comps that could be helpful when working on the Fair Rent cases. Moira maintains that the commission is not distributing information in the next few weeks; instead it could take months to complete. She it makes clear that the commission can handle numerous tasks simultaneously. Sandra states that the commission is curious on where Sharona stands with the Fair Rent cases. Additionally, she asks Sharona to conduct an informal poll and ask how the complainants have heard about the commission. In order to make the public aware of the Social Services Commission, the group considers adding a disclosure to rental leases. The first step would be to write additional legislation with the purpose of adding it to the City of Stamford's ordinances. The members agree to explore that avenue by visiting: www.municode.com to get a copy of the ordinance. Sharona reminds the group that some tenants have no proof of payment as they may be required by the landlord to pay in cash. Moira maintains that the commission's mission is to be a place where one comes to and a final decision is made. Ted suggests that the commission invite community groups so they can spread the word. Moira adds that their charge is not just fair rent; the bigger task is communication. She reminds the members that they have a February deadline for the Fact Sheet with the intention of launching it in the Spring. Sharona has the old fact sheets and will email the group as requested by Ted so that the group can view the information and be prepared for the next meeting.

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V. OLD BUSINESS

Kate shared information on affordable housing located in Norwalk. She added the housing is based on the individual's income. Sharona asked for a copy to share with her clients.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Moirra states that she is interested in obtaining information about apartments in Stamford that are low income. Ted informs the members that Tim Beeble, Director of Community Development is able to provide information on this topic and he can be reached at 203-977-4864. Further, Tim can answer whether there are any low market rate apartments available. Sandra states that she is aware that some are set aside for city employees. She adds that a preference is given to teachers who cannot afford living in Stamford but want to move close to their jobs. Ted assures the members that he will do his best to get some answers; however, he suggests that they call Tim Beeble directly.

Although, the group considered moving November's meeting, they found that there was no need to move it as all members were available. Everyone agrees to discuss the December meeting date at the November meeting.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned by Sandra Peterkin at 5:10 p.m.