

TO: Human Relations Commission (HRC)

FROM: Renter Protections Ad Hoc Sub Committee
Vice Chair Adriana Eberle
Commissioner Dr. Michelle Kraus

DATE: February 9, 2023

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item # 5** – Continued discussion of recommendations from the ad hoc sub-committee in response to the City Council referral to the Commission on ways to improve implementation of current City renter protections.

The Human Resources Commission is responding to the Council directive on Renter Protection provisions for the vast and growing numbers of renters living in the City of Palo Alto. The City's journey on Renter Protection began in 2018 with an ordinance adopted on September 17, 2018, and a Colleagues' Memorandum championed by Councilmember Dubois and Kou and discussed in 2019.

After extensive research and study by Commissioners Eberle and Kraus, the HRC has responded to the Council's directive on six recommendations and has included two additional recommendations concerning additional renter protection (ATTACHMENT A - see Pg. 3).

As a Commission, we urge the Council to move quickly in providing the necessary staff and resources to move forward on all of these. From our research, clearly neighboring and surrounding cities have made much more headway. They have done so with dedicated resources such as our neighbor Mountain View. In fact, the White House has made renter protection a priority for the Country this week because it concerns 44M people nationwide – or 35% of the US population.

Background Information:

Report from HRC ad hoc sub committee on Renter Protections from 11-10-22 HRC meeting.

<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/community-services/human-relations-commission/agendas/2022/11-10-22-agenda-item-4-recommendations-from-the-ad-hoc-sub-committee.pdf>

Staff report on a Study Session with the Planning & Transportation Commission from 9-30-20 on the renter community and renter protections in Palo Alto.

<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/agendas-minutes-reports/agendas-minutes/planning-and-transportation-commission/2020-agendas-minutes-and-staff-reports/ptc-renter-community-and-protections-in-pa-09302020.pdf>

ATTACHMENT A

Amended draft recommendations from the HRC to the City Council:

1. Council to direct PAMP and Project Sentinel to increase community outreach regarding the availability of the non-binding Palo Alto Mediation Program. Although the program is highly effective for landlord/tenant dispute resolution, it could benefit from greater community awareness. The HRC recommends that PAMP and Project Sentinel set up information sessions at the city libraries periodically; and that staff update local online communities – particularly on Nextdoor.
2. Council to direct staff to explore ways to ensure that all rental leases issued to renters in the City of Palo Alto include the City's Mandatory Response Clause.
3. Council authorizes that the proposed Rental Survey Program move aggressively forward with the necessary funding and staffing.
4. Council to direct staff to expand outreach and consider penalties for landlords who fail to register all their properties. These penalties can be affected by an amendment of the City's Mandatory Response Clause ordinance or as part of the new Rental Survey Program.
5. Council to patch the gaps left by California State law AB14824: 1) Cover renters who have lived in their units less than one year; 2) Include eviction protection to units that are single-family homes not owned by a corporation.
6. Council to expand the City-wide relocation assistance to multi-unit buildings with less than 10 units, not owned by corporations. Not including duplexes where one unit is owner occupied.
7. Recommends that Council proceed with a Fair Chance Ordinance. The HRC agrees with the PTC in limiting landlords' ability to inquire about an applicant's criminal history and the development of a Fair Chance Ordinance. Two cities have passed such over the past two years – Berkeley and Oakland; are considered 'best practice ordinances.' No one has taken leadership in Santa Clara County.
8. Recommends that Council the recommends the implementation of a 'Proactive Rental Inspection Programs.' These are powerful renter protection tools, and are being explored by neighboring jurisdictions. The proactive rental inspection program would mean that inspectors were routinely visiting the entire rental housing inventory to make sure that the units were safe and legal for all residents whether they are market rate tenants, seniors or disabled.