



Development and Services
April 27, 2021 -5:00 PM
Zoom Meeting
2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29201

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Allison Terracio, Chair, Derrek Pugh, Gretchen Barron, Cheryl English, and Chakisse Newton.

OTHERS PRESENT: Bill Malinowski, Jesica Mackey, Bill Malinowski, Michelle Onley, Leonardo Brown, Tamar Black, Kyle Holsclaw, Ashiya Myers, Mike Zaprzalka, Mike Maloney, Clayton Voignier, John Thompson, Elizabeth McLean, Lori Thomas, Randy Pruitt, Stacey Hamm, Michael Byrd, Dante Roberts, Dale Welch, Lauren Hogan, Dwight Hanna, Geo Price, Andrea Mathis, Ronaldo Myers, and Brian Crooks

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Ms. Terracio called the meeting to order at approximately 5:00 PM.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

a. Regular Session: March 23, 2021 – Ms. Barron moved, seconded by Ms. English, to approve the minutes as distributed.

In Favor: Pugh, Terracio, Barron, English, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous

3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA** – Mr. Pugh moved, seconded by Ms. Barron, to adopt the agenda as distributed.

In Favor: Pugh, Terracio, Barron, English, and Newton.

The vote in favor was unanimous.

4. **ITEMS PENDING ANALYSIS: NO ACTION REQUIRED**

a. **I move to evaluate affordable housing options to include the option of establishing an Affordable Housing Trust Fund for Richland County as a benefit to the public. Housing is considered to be “affordable” when 30% or less of one’s income is spent on housing and utilities. In Richland County, nearly half of renters pay more than a third of their income on rent and utilities**[Terracio] – Ms.

Terracio noted she had an update from her work with the Columbia Affordable Housing Task Force. She shared the task force’s written report with Council members. There is also a request to have Brian Grady with the South Carolina State Housing to speak to Council during the next scheduled committee meeting.

Mr. Livingston stated he would share the documents he received regarding affordable housing from MORE Justice with Council and staff.

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Ms. Terracio requested those items be included in the next agenda packet.

Ms. Livingston responded in the affirmative.

- b. **I move to direct the County Attorney to work with the County Administrator to research and draft an absentee landlord ordinance. The ordinance should provide potential remedies for individuals who violate county ordinances and provide, via supplemental documentation, a comprehensive review of the legal impacts [potentially] associated with the adoption of such an ordinance. [NEWTON and DICKERSON]** – Ms. Terracio noted, based on her last conversation with the Administrator, there was supposed to be a conversation with the Acting County Attorney.

Ms. McLean responded she believes Mike Zaprzalka had put together an update. She believes we have pulled back on this ordinance and tried to pare it down and make it more about typical nuisance issues at rental properties. Staff has taken out the portions related to the building code violations, and need confirmation that is the direction Council and Ms. Newton wants to go. We believe this ordinance deals with issues like weeds and rank vegetation, Sheriff's Department frequently coming out to the property, noise violations, and such other nuisance type violations. The violations are based on a points system similar to what the City did, although the County's is a little bit different. If this is the way Council wants to go, staff will get together and put together a cost analysis on what it would take from a departmental level, who would need to get involved, how much staff would be needed, and get feedback from the Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff's Department had some issues with staff, as well as how the counting system worked. Since people do not go to court quickly, it can take over a year before somebody is found guilty of these violations. She noted staff is looking for guidance as to where to go from here.

Ms. Terracio stated the constituents from District Five would support something where a consequence could be felt swiftly enough it would incentivize the property owner or the renter to change their behaviors and/or actions. For example, university students renting properties in Rosewood or Olympia are having parties that are a nuisance to the community. By the time consequences would be felt, the residents would be gone.

Ms. English inquired about the enforceability and effectiveness of the ordinance if the person was in another state by the end of the year. She inquired if the citation would be presented to the homeowner or renter.

Ms. Newton stated, as the maker of the motion, her intention for this motion is there are a lot of properties where there are renters who are violating County ordinances on a regular basis, but do not feel incentivized to correct because they do not live there. The question is how we make sure the property owners have skin in the game. If we cannot have the tenants do better, perhaps the landlord would be motivated to do so. She noted the working group has identified a lot of challenges with the ordinances, and she would be open to correcting those challenges. She noted on p. 15, Section 16-72(b), states, "Before a rental permit can be granted, the owner or landlord shall certify that the subject property complies with the relevant International Property Maintenance Code for minimum building code standards of residential properties in Richland County." She inquired if that was left in by mistake or was it left in on purpose.

Ms. McLean responded the language was left in on purpose as another way to cite the landowner. It could easily be struck from the ordinance.

Ms. Newton noted, at one point, in the original draft it was very heavy toward inspections. She inquired, since Section 16-7(b) is just self-certification, does it increase the cost of implementation of the program.

Ms. McLean responded she does not think it would increase the cost. If a renter came back and complained about their landlord not fixing the property, and the County had to do an inspection, it would give the County another way to cite the landowner. It is not the County's intention to go out and look at the property to make sure it is in compliance.

Ms. Newton inquired, if staff envisions tenants reporting landowners for code violations. She noted that could add a component that is slightly different, and she wants to be clear on the scope.

Ms. McLean responded she does not see why a tenant could not call attention to weeds and rank vegetation if it is a part of their lease agreement. She supposes the renter could file a complaint, but she does not know how often that would happen. Usually the tenants are the violators, not the landowners.

Ms. Newton noted, when the workgroup comes back together, she would love to look at the timeframe of how we are doing this. Depending on the terms of the lease, you could have a situation where you have a landlord who repeatedly has tenants that violate the County's ordinances, but due to when the leases expire, they never have any consequences or motivation to do better.

Ms. Terracio noted the reason this motion came about was because of the behaviors on the part of the renter(s). Anything the County can do to protect the rights of renters to have decent places to live, and hold landlords accountable, would be beneficial to the citizens of Richland County.

Ms. Newton stated, when staff is evaluating this, as we deal with issues about property and property management, there are a lot of complexities. She wanted to ensure that renter's rights are also protected. Renter's rights was not really the intent of this motion. If the mechanisms of enforcement are different, staff should have the latitude to recommend a separate ordinance to address the renter's rights. It might not be necessary, but she noted this was delayed before because it veered into a different category. Therefore, if we are going to discuss mechanisms to make landlords repair things for tenants, those issues might need to be addressed separately.

5. **ADJOURNMENT** – The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:31PM.