

Minutes of the Fairfax County Tenant-Landlord Commission

August 13, 2020

Audio Bridge Electronic Meeting
Chairman Fielding presiding

Attendance:

Commissioners Chamberlain, Fielding, Fusaro,
Geier-Smith, Harberg, Islam, Park, Purnell

Absent:

None

Staff Attending:

Michael S. Liberman, Director
Cable and Consumer Services Division
(in Conference Room 11)
Rebecca L. Makely, Director
Consumer Services Division
(in Conference Room 11)
Susan C. Jones, Branch Chief
Consumer Affairs Branch
(in Conference Room 11)
Vee Johnson, Consumer Specialist II
Consumer Affairs Branch
(in Conference Room 11)
Heidi Baggett, Administrative Assistant
Consumer Affairs Branch IV
(on audio bridge)

The electronic meeting was called to order at 7:31p.m. by Chairman Fielding.

Quorum, Location and Audibility of Members' Voices

Chairman Fielding conducted a Roll Call to verify that a quorum of members is participating; and that each member's voice is clear, audible, and at an appropriate volume for all of the other members; and the location from which member is participating. The roll call is as follows:

Vincent Fusaro – Springfield
Robert Chamberlain – Alexandria
Shahana Islam - Fairfax
Karen Geier-Smith – Fairfax
Paula Park – Annandale
Jade Harberg – Springfield
Amy Purnell - Alexandria

Chairman Fielding passed the virtual gavel to Vice-Chairman, Commissioner Park. A motion was made by Chairman Fielding that each member's voice can be adequately heard by each member of the Tenant-Landlord Commission (Commission). This motion was seconded by Commissioner Geier-Smith. The motion carried unanimously.

Need for an Electronic Meeting

A motion was made by Chairman Fielding that the State of Emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic makes it unsafe for the Commission to physically assemble and unsafe for the public to physically attend any such meeting, and that as such, FOIA's usual procedures, which require the physical assembly of the Commission and the physical presence of the public, cannot be implemented safely or practically. Chairman Fielding further moved that the Commission may conduct this meeting electronically through a dedicated audio-conferencing line, and that the public may access this meeting by calling 1-866-434-5269 and entering access code 6751420. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fusaro. The motion carried unanimously.

Need to dispense with FOIA's Usual Procedures to Assure Continuity in Government/Continue Operations

A motion was made by Chairman Fielding that all of the matters addressed on the agenda must address the Emergency itself, are necessary for continuity in Fairfax County government, and/or are statutorily required or necessary to continue operations and the discharge of the Commission's lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Fusaro. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Geier-Smith and seconded by Commissioner Harberg to approve the minutes from February 13, 2020. The motion carried unanimously.

Report of the Chairman

Chairman Fielding expressed appreciation for the ability to hold a Commission meeting. He welcomed new Commissioners Chamberlain and Islam.

Report of the Directors

Director Liberman discussed the Fairfax County FY 2021 budget process and the Countywide Strategic Plan. He explained how the Fairfax County FY 2021 budget aligns with the Fairfax Countywide Strategic Plan.

Director Makely discussed the Tenant-Landlord Commission FY 2020 Annual Report, stating it was in draft form and will be ready for review in September and a Commission vote at the October 8, 2020 meeting. She discussed options for a commission photo and stated the delay in the report would not impact the FY 2020 statistics.

Staff Report

Tenant landlord inquires and complaints have remained consistent during COVID-19.

A case regarding a tenant concerned about the landlord's entry into the home during COVID-19 was summarized. According to the tenant, the landlord entered the home to take measurements for home improvements and wanted to return with contractors. Due to the tenant's health and safety concerns for their family, the tenant requested the landlord and contractors not enter until the lease expired in

less than two months. After Consumer Affairs intervention, the landlord stated they followed guidelines established by the Center for Disease Control while in the rental dwelling due to the current public health crisis. However, as requested, the landlord decided not to make any improvements, unless an emergency repair is needed, until the tenants vacate the premises.

The first virtual Northern Virginia Housing expo was launched in June 2020 and will remain online through the rest of the calendar year. During the first month the page had 16,720 visits. Consumer Affairs had 51 visits. It is expected that the 2021 expo will also be virtual.

Commission Matters

Commissioner Fusaro welcomed Commissioners Chamberlain and Islam and was glad the Commission could meet.

Commissioner Geier-Smith welcomed Commissioners Chamberlain and Islam and inquired about their interest in joining the Commission. She finds COVID “land” interesting.

Commissioner Park welcomed Commissioners Chamberlain and Islam.

Commissioner Harberg welcomed the Commissioners Chamberlain and Islam. She inquired about how the county is handling tenant-landlord issues during the pandemic.

Commissioner Purnell welcomed Commissioners Chamberlain and Islam. She expressed gratitude for those who are healthy and safe and concern for those facing hardships during the pandemic.

Commissioner Chamberlain is extremely thrilled to be a member of the Commission.

Commissioner Islam is excited to be a Commissioners and is thankful for the opportunity.

Old Business

None

New Business

• Election of Officers

Pursuant to Article IV of the By-Laws, Commissioner Geier-Smith made a motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Purnell, to elect the following slate of candidates:

| | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Commissioner Harberg | Tenant Vice-Chairman |
| Commissioner Park | Landlord Vice-Chairman |
| Commissioner Fusaro | Secretary |

The slate was elected: 6 Ayes, 2 Abstentions

• COVID-19 Pandemic Response

Director Liberman provided an overview of the status of Fairfax County Government.

- March 27, 2020, Government Center closed to the public.
- April 14, 2020, Board of Supervisors meeting was held in Government Center conference room 11.
- April 28, 2020, Board of Supervisors began fully electronic meetings.
- May 2020 Planning Commission began fully electronic meetings.
- June 2020 Board of Zoning Appeals began fully electronic meetings.
- July 14, 2020, Board of Supervisors returned to in-person meetings.

Director Liberman provided the following overview of work performed by the Department of Cable and Consumer Services:

Communications Policy and Regulation Division:

- Provides online information for low-cost internet connection options.
- Staff 100 percent teleworking.

Communications Productions Division

- Produced virtual budget town hall meetings, and COVID-19 messaging.
- Staff on rotating schedule, with teleworking and in-person productions.

Consumer Services Division (provided by Rebecca L. Makely, Director)

Accounting and Finance:

- Completed year-end budget for FY 2020.
- 100 percent teleworking.

Meeting Space Management and Event Support:

- Assisting customers with rescheduling, cancelling, and modifying reservations.
- Staff on rotating schedule with teleworking and meeting support.

Regulation and Licensing:

- Processing in-person license applications on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. (Office hours are Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)
- Staff on rotating schedule.

Consumer Affairs:

- Processing complaints electronically.
- Posting COVID-19 updates on Consumer Affairs Facebook page.
- *Your Community, You're Connected* aired on July 7, 2020 was an electronic segment with guests appearing virtually to discuss the 2020 Legislative Review for HOAs.
- *Consumer Connection* program is live every month. The August 27, 2020 topic is Tenant Landlord Rights and Responsibilities as it Relates to COVID.
- Staff 100 percent teleworking.

Director Liberman gave an overview of different methods the Board of Supervisors uses to hold meetings and obtain public input.

Director Liberman gave an overview of the options to meet for boards, authorities, and commissions. A discussion ensued on these options.

General Interest

Commissioner Fielding reviewed the yearly schedule of meetings on the second Thursday in February, April, June, August, October, and December, at 7:30 p.m. He informed that the schedule can be reviewed and revised in the future if needed.

No comments were made on the statistics or outreach topics.

A motion was made by Commissioner Geier-Smith and seconded by Commissioner Fusaro to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.