

City of Cambridge

The Rent Control Committee conducted a public hearing on Thursday, August 16, 1990, beginning at 5:45 p.m. in the Sullivan Chamber, City Hall.

Vice Mayor Kenneth E. Reeves, Chair of the above referenced Committee convened the hearing and stated that the overall purpose of this date's proceedings, was to consider the scheduling of Working Meetings based on specific topics resulting in offering changes and improvements to the Rent Control System for consideration by the City Council. Present at the hearing were: Councillor Jonathan S. Myers, Councillor William H. Walsh, Rent Control Executive Director, Terrence Morris and Deputy City Clerk, John E. Flynn.

To begin the proceedings, the Chair recognized Councillor Myers for his opening remarks. In those remarks Councillor Myers stated his commitment to a strong rent control system. He also concurred with the Chair's description of the meetings to be held in the upcoming months emphasizing the word working as it relates to the Committee's review of the rent control system.

Councillor Walsh in his opening remarks, stated his hope for a more fair system once the Committee identifies and recommends changes and improvements based on a review of the entire rent control system. He further stated that the Committee should define what is fair for all and that it should also study the present useage of housing throughout the City.

Upon conclusion of the opening remarks Vice Mayor Reeves recommended to the Committee the scheduling of a meeting to be held on Thursday, September 6, 1990 beginning at 5:30 p.m. The Vice Mayor further stated his intent to focus future meetings on specific pressing issues and recommended that the meeting previously mentioned concern itself with the issue of enforcement as it relates to codes and city ordinances.

Vice Mayor Reeves requested of Mr. Morris to provide the Committee with a document outlining the enforcement mechanism currently in place, identification of problem areas along with staff recommendations to ensure that it functions more smoothly.

Councillor Walsh voiced his disagreement with the selected topic as the starting point of the Committee's review stating that housing issues were more important and this topic does not tend to lead itself as top priority.

Vice Mayor Reeves in response stated given the fact that the City Council has received public testimony on properties located at 580 Mass. Avenue, 1 Coolidge Place and 292-298 Broadway and the conditions that tenants must endure and enforcement is an issue and a most timely one to discuss at this point.

Councillor Myers concurred stating that enforcement was one of the six or so issues that needed to be discussed by this committee.

Vice Mayor Reeves requested the Committee members to submit a list of topics prior to the September 6, 1990 meeting in order that a schedule could be developed and ample notice be given to all interested parties.

Mr. Morris stated that enforcement is one of several remedies and that the properties previously mentioned relate to the condition of the housing.

Councillor Myers stated that enforcement was a highly appropriate subject for the Committee to discuss since the subject matter relates to the supply of housing being provided to the City.

Councillor Walsh stated that beginning with this issue was like putting the cart before the horse since the topic was an outgrowth of problems within the entire rent control system. Vice Mayor Reeves in response stated that the area of enforcement by definition offers a wide variety of issues for consideration and discussion since its impact is felt across the board. At this time the Committee heard from Mr. John Natale, Co-Chair of the Small Property Owners Association (SPOA), who stated his disagreement with the topic as the first issue stating that it was more an issue with his association and did not deserve this status.

Vice Mayor Reeves stated that the topic did not denote a priority or not a priority but only as a starting point for the Committee in its review of the entire rent control system.

The Committee then heard from Ms. Denise Jilson, 5 Chester Street and Ms. Eileen Sullivan, 287 Huron Avenue who both recorded their disagreement with the proposed scheduled topic for the meeting of September 6, 1990 stating that there exists more important issues and that a wrong message is being sent to affected parties.

Mr. Morris recommended that given the fact that the term enforcement is a loaded one that this Committee dovetail its agenda with that of the Rent Control Board (RCB) and presently the RCB is dealing with the issue of interest rates on capital improvements.

Councillor Myers commenting on Mr. Morris's statement stated that since this is the first overall review of the Rent Control System by the City Council and there does exist an interest in what the RCB's agenda but the City Council is the policy making body of the City.

Vice Mayor Reeves stated that coordination would be helpful but since the membership of the RCB is appointed by the City Manager it is necessary to take an overall look at the system first and then tackle the complex issues.

Councillor Walsh reiterated his position regarding this topic stating that if there exists a predetermined agenda for the Committee it should be brought forward and if enforcement is to be the topic then all agencies and departments with jurisdiction should be brought into the process.

Vice Mayor Reeves stated that there is an agenda before the Committee and that is to improve Rent Control and make it work better for both sides of the issues.

Councillor Myers moved the question and on a voice vote the questioned carried (2-1-0-0). At this time the Chair surveyed the Committee and the public regarding areas of concerns and possible topics for future meetings.

Councillor Myers stated the following areas of concern:

- 1) General adjustment;
- 2) Low rents/minimum rents;
- 3) Enforcement;
- 4) Number of rent control units in the City;
- 5) Distress/conditions of units; and,
- 6) Rent Caps.

Councillor Walsh stated the following areas of interest:

- 1) Distressed Properties;
- 2) Minimum Rents;
- 3) Nonpayment of Rents;
- 4) Means Test;
- 5 Vacancy Decontrol;
- 6) Institutional exempt properties; and
- 7) Brookline reforms.

Mr. Natale stated the following areas of interest by SPOA:

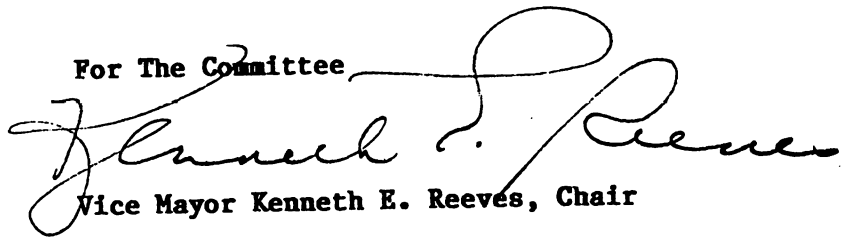
- 1) Capital improvement recission;
- 2) Defination of fair net operating income;
- 3) Exemption of 3 units;
- 4) 120 days rule;
- 5) Sabatical;
- 6) Defination of family members;
- 7) Work with RCB;
- 8) Means Test; and
- 9) Eviction cases.

Mr. Michael Turk of 24 Prescott Street, Cambridge requested the Committee to review the banking policies of city based banks as they relate to rent controlled properties.

Vice Mayor Reeves closed the hearing by requesting SPOA and Cambridge Tenants to work with the Committee and be part of the discussions.

The hearing was adjourned at 7:19 p.m.

For The Committee

A large, stylized handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Kenneth E. Reeves". The signature is written over the printed name and title.

Vice Mayor Kenneth E. Reeves, Chair

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COMMITTEE REPORTS

S-373

Report from the Rent Control Committee
for a hearing held on Thursday, Aug. 16,
1990 to consider scheduling of Working
Meetings based on specific topics resulting
in offering changes and improvements to
the Rent Control System.

In City Council,

February 25, 1991

Charter Right
exercised by
Councillor Walsh
Report Accepted
Placed on file