

# City of Cambridge

The Rent Control Committee conducted a public hearing on Tuesday, February 25, 1992, beginning at 6:00 p.m. in the Sullivan Chamber, City Hall.

Councillor Jonathan S. Myers, Chair of the above referenced Committee, convened the hearing and stated that the purpose of this date's proceedings was to discuss the Committee's agenda and goals for the 1992-1993 term. Present at the hearing were: Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr., Councillor William H. Walsh and Deputy City Clerk John E. Flynn.

To begin the discussion, Councillor Myers stated his intention to use the Committee's time and energies to focus effectively on what can and needs to be done with regards to Rent Control within the City of Cambridge. The Chair noted the fact that the citizenry possessed a strong recognition of the policy of Rent Control but that problems exist and extend on both sides of the issue. Councillor Myers further stated his desire to focus on three to five areas of concern to make improvements to the Rent Control System. He further urged caution to those assembled not to rehash stated positions but to deal with areas of common concern and agreement. He also stated that the agenda of the first three meetings would serve to flush out the agenda of the Committee for the term. The Chair also stated his desire to work towards some agreements between the differences that exist among various constituent groups.

The Committee, upon completion of the Chair's opening remarks, opened the floor to public comment and testimony.

Mr. Salim Kabawat, Co-Chair of the Small Property Owners Association (SPOA), 145 Bishop Allen Drive, stated his appreciation to the Chair for his willingness to work to help solve some of the problems presently being faced by his association and that at a later date a position paper would be forwarded by SPOA with regards to the Committee's Agenda.

Mr. Kabawat further stated that his Association will sponsor a ten (10) point agenda which will deal with the following three areas:

- Bread and Butter Issue - Rent.

- \*Question of low rents - Mayor Emeritus Vellucci's Green Ribbon Report.

- \*Management fees.

- \*Question of Capital Improvement.

- Removal of the Rent Control Board from the Eviction Process.
- Question of exempting of some units from the Rent Control Rolls.

\*Expanding of Sabbatical Rule.

Mr. Neil Rohr, 279 Pearl Street, C.E.O.C. Tenant Services, offered the Committee the following discussion points:

- Condominium Conversion - extend state-wide protection to those past 1969 tenants who are presently not protected in non-rent control properties.
- Eviction Process - presently 707 and Section 8 tenants are exempted from the rent control eviction process. C.E.O.C. supports the extending of this eviction protection to these rental subsidies.

At this time the Committee heard from Mr. Bill Noble, 38 Green Street and a member of the Cambridge Tenant Union: who stated the belief that there exists strong support but unsure if the City has strong rent control. He offered the following discussion points:

- Enforcement.
- Inventory - not an agenda item but a fact.
- Affiliate Housing - questions surround the definition of the term, why the units are not included on the rent control rolls and what can be done to return them to the rolls.
- Rent by precise unit versus General Adjustment mechanism.

At this time Mr. Michael Turk, 24 Prescott Street and Co-Chair of the Cambridge Tenants Union, offered the following area of interest by his membership:

- Rent - the General Adjustment is presently driving rents upward; Control on large rent increases brought on by large capital investments (one suggestion offered was a phase in of rent increases); revolving loan fund.
- Removal Process - two areas of interest - enforcement and affiliate housing.
- Role of Rent Control Board in carrying out the mandate of the enabling legislation.

- Access - the creation of a Housing Access Office to break down the barriers for poor people and people of color (suggested that this office work independently of the Rent Control Board perhaps within the Department of Human Service Programs.)

The Committee then heard from Mr. Robert J. LaTremouille, Esq., 348 Franklin Street who offered the following discussion points:

- cited his support for the extending of rent control eviction protection to Section 8 tenants.
- Condominium Conversion - Acceptance of the State Condominium Conversion Statute.
- Transition Exemptions.
- Removal Ordinance - as it relates to buildings in the 1969-1983 era.

At this time Ms. Lenore Schloming, 102 Inman Street, stated her belief that the present capital improvement mechanism is not fair to either tenants or property owners. She spoke of the need of a capital reserve function to be built into the base rent. She also stated her support for the Chair's formation of an Advisory Committee to work with this Council Committee.

Mr. Alex Steinbergh, 3 Clinton Street, outlined to the Committee the following discussion areas:

- A purchasing cooperative - between tenants and property owners to negotiate with vendors (i.e. oil, insurance, maintenance) to lower costs and increase property owners profit margin. The City would back and guarantee the negotiated purchases.
- The purchase of Rent Control units by the City.
- Means Test and Rent Guarantees.
- Vacancy Decontrol - property owners would pay a dollar amount to the Affordable Housing Trust fund thus releasing the unit from Rent Control and with the proceeds the City would purchase Rent Control units.

Upon conclusion of public testimony, Councillor Myers outlined the following housekeeping measures:

- Recommended that the interested parties exchange their respective proposals with each other.
- Scheduled the next two hearing dates for the Committee:
  - \*March 24, 1992 at 6:30 p.m.
  - \*April 7, 1992 at 5:30 p.m.

The Chair then outlined to those assembled some priorities that he would like to look at and discuss in the upcoming term. Those included:

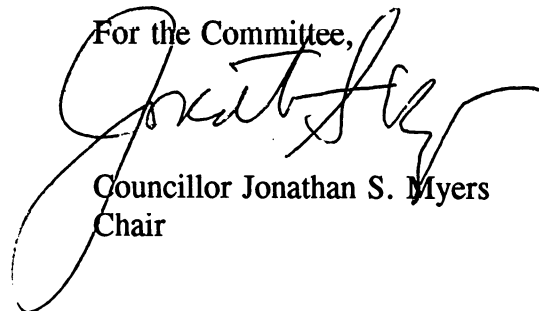
- Rent - extremes
- Inventory
- Enforcement/Inspection
- Access.

Councillor Toomey then offered the following points of discussion:

- Access
- Conditions of Rent Control Property - deleading process and its impact on rentals to families.

Councillor Walsh stated his support for the Chair's formation of an Advisory Committee and the exchanging of positions between interested parties.

The hearing was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

For the Committee,  
  
Councillor Jonathan S. Myers  
Chair

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# COMMITTEE REPORT

A communication was received from John E. Flynn, Deputy City clerk, transmitting a report from Councillor Jonathan S. Myers, Chair of the Rent Control Committee, for a hearing held on Tuesday, February 25, 1992, relative to a discussion of the Committee's Agenda and goals for the 1992-1993 term.

In City Council,

March 16, 1992

*Report accepted  
Placed on file*