

Arlington County Tenant-Landlord Commission Meeting (Virtual)

Meeting Notes 5.12.21

Commissioners present: David Timm (Chair), Kirit Mookerjee, Kristin Clegg, Nicole Merlene, Emily Camardo, Matthew Whitfield, Esq. Christopher Wimbush.

Commissioners Absent: Bismah Ahmed, Anne Elyse Hayes

Virtual meeting held through electronic communication. A recording of the meeting is available on the County's webpage.

Approval of meeting notes – Approval of April meeting notes was deferred.

Public comment: Speakers comments were related to agenda item #2 - Serrano

1. Virginia Rent Relief Program (recording available):

Chris Thompson, Virginia Housing and Senta Gorrie, DHCD presented information on the rent Relief Program and highlighted utilization in the Northern Virginia area with reference to Arlington. Highlights included 32,000 evictions prevented to date. 52% of renters served were black households and \$9m spent in Arlington across 120 properties; 650 participating landlords. There were several questions and discussions following the presentation.

2. Serrano Apartment Complex

Several tenants from the Serrano apartment building and a representative from V.O.I.C.E. attended the meeting to express concerns about living conditions at the building. Conditions included rodents, condition of air conditioning systems, mold, security concerns, utility billings and lack of concern from management staff. Commissioner Merlene expressed concern about whether residents understood their rights under VRLTA and advised that residents contact Legal Services of Northern VA to better understand their rights, whether they might be due compensation. There were concerns about whether adequate inspections had taken place to determine the extent of the mold problem related to mold and other building systems such as heating and air conditioning. DHS staff advised of the action being taken to contact Housing Choice Voucher and Housing Grant holders to advise them of their options regarding housing and whether relocation is possible. A representative from AHC was in attendance and addressed questions regarding residents being able to terminate leases without penalty and possibly get accommodation at other AHC owned properties. There was agreement on the following additional items/ areas of concern to be added to a similar Housing Commission letter. This will include:

1. Legal Services of Northern Virginia would be added for legal consultation by residents.
2. There should be a coordinated approach by the County to contacting residents with follow up actions, to reduce confusion.
3. Inspections should be physical inspections and time-stamped for legal reference.

4. Identification of timeframes since some actions are required within a specified period.
5. The County's responsibility should be noted in the letter

A vote was taken to add these conditions (language to be shaped by David Timm) to an existing letter. The vote was unanimous.

Chair Timm, spoke of either a joint meeting between Housing Commission and the TLC as a follow up or that members of TLC would attend the Housing Commission meeting on June 3.

The meeting ended at 9:17 p.m. motion moved by Commissioner Camardo and seconded by Commissioner Clegg.