

Rental Research Stakeholder Meeting Minutes

July 7th, 2015

Julie Banks, Chair Public Safety-

- Introduction
- Spoke about the restart after the last meeting, the group decided to take a month off to reassess the group and do a few surveys as well as better define the roles of staff and the Chair.
- Described the role of the committee and of the staff present, Melissa Wittstruck of Office of Neighborhood Services will be the facilitator, Jackie Caro of Office of Neighborhood Services will be aiding in the follow up and contact with the group as well as providing material and taking white board notes during meetings, Sarah Kintner from ONS will be the note taker and help with follow-up information and scheduling.
- Mentioned that as part of the restart staff had sent out a survey for feedback on the process as agreed to and a survey on the decision making model.

Jackie Caro, Office of Neighborhood Services-

- Spoke about Survey Monkey results that the group was asked to fill out, ONS will be further looking into the suggestions from the survey and reach out to suggested speakers.
 - Are there additional speakers that should be invited to attend? *No: 72.73% Yes: 27.27%*
 - Small property owners
 - Code enforcement and health department (already scheduled to attend)
 - Actual landlords and tenants
 - Spokane School District #81, Northwest Fair Housing Alliance, Cindy Algeo from Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium, Spokane Homeless Coalition Organizations to represent populations at risk of disparate impact due to current housing in Spokane.
 - Do you feel that there are voices missing from the stakeholder process? *No: 81.82% Yes: 18.18%*
 - Comments included small scale landlords, landlord and tenant lawyers, Fair Housing and Human Rights Commission, more tenants
 - Reduce the size of the group
 - Decision Making Model Survey:
 - Voting: 40%
 - Consensus: 60%
 - Abstain: 0

Melissa Wittstruck, Office of Neighborhood Services, Facilitator

- Agenda was approved by the group.
- Read the ground rules which included a new ground rule that questions will be held until the end of each speaker presentation.
- Potential new meeting schedule- next meeting on August 4th; group is moving to a every month schedule to give the speakers and staff enough time to prepare materials.

Sergeant Dan Ervin-

- Dan is part of the Civil Enforcement Unit which focuses on problem properties, looks at addresses drawing crime activity within community.
- Presented a PowerPoint on Rental Housing from Spokane Police Department Perspective, presentation can be found here.

Stakeholder Questions and Comments:

Q- Are landlords in general cooperative with police? Are landlords resistant to allowing onto and into properties?

A- Some are great, some are not. Cannot generalize.

Q- If you come across occasion to communicate with tenant what advice do you offer if living in unlivable situation?

A- Still learning, filling my toolbox. Issue needs to be addressed. Currently in the process of learning of all the different resources that are in the community that can help with legal aid.

Q- How do you see the tenant associations' ability to work with tenants and managers to address some of these situations?

A- First, what can and cannot be addressed under landlord/tenant act and what expectations can a tenant have? Educate on tenants ability to impact living environment.

Q- How would licensing process go? Would begin with a test?

A- Cannot provide this information, not for me to decide. Melissa- We'll get there in further discussions.

Q- Do you notify landlord after person has been released from jail?

A- No. If evicted and returns after being released a landlord should give a notice of trespass so that police may take action.

Q- Arrest letter rate is pretty high, but what about person who is not charged, are there any safeguards to allow the person back into their home?

A- Property owner can use their discretion, I recommend if someone is not to move to eviction after first offense but if it is a repeat occurrence action is necessary.

A- Eric Basset recommended looking at the SLIHC program for high risk tenants to get back into housing (this was added to the resource board)

Q- Chris- Who is letter sent to?

A- Property owner of record. Sometimes requires digging. GAP identified. Management database of local contact would be very useful.

Q- How does unit size impact calls? Is this problem unique to large complexes? How do you think licenses will fix the problem? What would be the advantage of a license?

A- No. It tends to be the small to mid-size complexes. But runs the gamut.
Pt 2- the current methods of addressing issues is a lengthy legal process that puts many people at risk of displacement.