



Land Use & Environment Committee

Approach to Rental Housing Outreach

Agenda Date: 5/27/2021
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Title

Approach to Rental Housing Outreach

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Discussion only. No action requested.

City Manager Recommendation:

Discussion only. No action requested.

Report

Issue:

Whether to discuss the scope and approach for the rental housing community outreach.

Staff Contact:

Cary Retlin, Home Fund Manager, Executive, 360.570.3956

Presenter(s):

Cary Retlin, Home Fund Manager
Christa Lenssen, Housing Program Specialist

Background and Analysis:

Staff will provide the committee with an update on statewide changes to the Residential Landlord Tenant Act recently signed by the Governor, a brief history of this topic, and options for next steps on engaging the public on actions Olympia could take relevant to renter protections.

Past Tenant Protection Conversations with the Land Use and Environment Committee (LUEC) and City Council

In May 2019, City of Tumwater staff approached Olympia, Lacey, and Thurston County to propose a cross-jurisdictional approach to exploring renter protections. Tumwater staff shared a long list of tenant protections that served as the beginning of potential changes that could be considered. That list was ranked by the Tumwater City Council based on impact and ease of adoption. The LUEC reviewed that list in August and made their own rankings with many overlaps.

In October 2019, the LUEC reviewed and revised a list of the Tumwater protections and ranked them

based on what appears most ready for consideration for adoption. Many of those items have been adopted in other cities. Just causes for terminations of tenancy were on that list.

In October 2019, the Washington Community Action Network and local tenants rallied outside City Hall and spoke to the City Council about renter protections. They also proposed renter protections for Olympia that included just causes for terminations and evictions.

In March 2019, the LUEC hosted a community meeting on rental housing at Washington Middle School to kickoff discussion of potential code changes related to tenant protections. The meeting was well attended by tenants, property owners, and some property managers. The format of the meeting had to be changed to accommodate a tenant group protest at the beginning of the meeting so that property managers and others could share their perspective.

In May 2020, staff brought the LUEC draft markups of potential code changes relevant to just cause and vacate notice timelines. Further action was postponed allowing for more community conversation - ideally when social distancing guidelines had been relaxed.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Potential changes to Olympia Municipal Code's Unfair Housing Practices (OMC 5.80) are a topic of significant interest to renters and rental housing owners and operators within the city and around Thurston County. Any work on this topic will draw a great deal of local and regional attention and public engagement.

Thurston Regional Planning Council estimates that 53 percent of Olympia households are renters.

Options:

1. Direct staff to proceed with public engagement plan discussed
2. Modify public engagement plan discussed
3. Take other action

Financial Impact:

Up to \$50,000 in 2020 funds carried over to 2021 may be used to contract consulting support of focus groups or other public engagement.

Attachments:

Code Changes Discussed in Other Cities