

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
September 18, 2012**

Present

Councilor Jeanne Raymond, Chair  
Councilor Mike Beilstein (12:05)  
Councilor Dan Brown

Staff

Jim Patterson, City Manager  
Ken Gibb, Community Development Director  
Kent Weiss, Housing Division Manager  
Bob Loewen, Housing Program Specialist  
Carrie Mullens, City Manager's Office

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

|     | <u>Agenda Item</u>                      | <u>Information Only</u> | <u>Held for Further Review</u> | <u>Recommendations</u>  |
|-----|---|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| I.  | Rental Housing Program Annual Report    |                         |                                | Accept the Rental Housing Program annual report for Fiscal Year 2011-2012 |
| II. | Other Business<br>*Cold weather shelter | Yes                     |                                |   |

Chair Raymond called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm.

**CONTENT OF DISCUSSION**

I. Rental Housing Program Annual Report (Attachment)

Mr. Weiss reviewed the staff report and noted that the Rental Housing Code was implemented in 2002, making this the tenth annual report. The Code has evolved through the years and, most recently, amended to include windows, door locks, and smoke detectors.

Mr. Weiss said, one year ago, the Housing Division explored with the Human Services Committee (HSC) amending the Rental Housing Code to include weatherization and habitability. When the Housing and Community Development Commission (HCDC) began discussing potential changes, the OSU/City Collaboration Project was initiated and the Neighborhood Livability Work Group (Work Group) began discussions related to code enforcement and the Rental Housing Code. A decision was made to postpone further Rental Housing Code amendment discussions until recommendations come forward from the Work Group.

In response to Chair Raymond's inquiry, Mr. Weiss said Mr. Loewen, Mr. Gibb, and Code Enforcement Supervisor Westfall have attended the Neighborhood Livability

meetings as resources. The group is reviewing overall housing and neighborhood conditions and ideas on how to address habitability issues. (Councilor Beilstein arrived at this time.)

Mr. Loewen reviewed the statistical information included in the report. Overall, the number of calls received last year declined, even though calls from landlords only declined by two. The majority of calls continue to come from tenants. Weatherproofing issues surpassed plumbing issues last year. Weatherproofing includes roofs, walls, and windows leaking water. Three enforcement cases were dealt with last year. One case concerned inadequate heat, one case lacked heat, and the third case involved locks, plumbing, and smoke detectors.

In response to Councilor Beilstein's inquiry about the decrease of calls when the number of renters is increasing, Mr. Loewen said he can only speculate it is related to the outreach and education portions of his job. He coordinates with OSU campus Start and Connect Programs, attends the International Student Fair and the Graduate Student Fair, makes presentations to the Linn-Benton Rental Housing Association and Board of Realtors, in addition to other education opportunities. Mr. Loewen said, last year attendance at the Start Program meetings averaged 20 people, including parents. This year that number has grown to approximately 60 at each meeting.

Staff responded to Chair Raymond's inquiries:

During outreach opportunities, do you provide pamphlets with rules and other requirements?

*Mr. Loewen: The Rental Housing Code brochure is provided.*

*Mr. Weiss: The brochure is available in English and Spanish.*

Do you work with Fire Prevention Officer Patton?

*Mr. Loewen: In addition to working with Mr. Patton regarding smoke detectors, the lack of proper basement egress is referred to his office, the Housing Division, and Code Enforcement. State law also requires carbon monoxide detectors.*

Mr. Weiss said the Housing Division is preparing for the annual rental housing fee billing. The per unit fee increases by \$1.00 every other year. This is the second year the per unit fee is \$11. The fee fully funds the program.

Mr. Loewen added that the number of units included in this billing cycle has increased by 800-900 units from last year. The increase may be due to construction and single family homes that could not sell. Involving collections services for the fees is minimal. Of the 11,800 invoices sent last year, approximately 15 were sent to collections. New landlords receive a letter and Rental Housing Program brochure with the invoice. Fraternities and sororities also receive a letter and brochure since they typically have a new "head of the house" each year.

Staff responded to Councilor Beilstein's inquiries about per unit definitions:

*Mr. Loewen: The per unit fee is based on the number of rental agreements. Quads have shared space, but separate areas. Each separate area has a rental agreement and counts as a unit.*

*Mr. Weiss: The unit fee for the Harrison Street development is based on each rental agreement. The Rental Housing Program looks at the landlord/tenant relationship.*

*Mr. Loewen: Fraternities and sororities are considered one unit with a different assessment rate per Council direction.*

Councilor Beilstein noted that OSU students pushed for this program. Without pressure from the Associated Students of OSU, the Rental Housing Program would not exist. He said it is a good program for students and the City.

The Committee unanimously recommends Council accept the Rental Housing Program annual report for Fiscal Year 2011-2012.

## II. Other Business

At the request of Chair Raymond, Mr. Patterson updated the Committee regarding the cold weather shelter. He held a meeting with representatives of the Homeless Coalition, Parks and Recreation Director Emery, and Fire Chief Emery. He learned that the cold weather shelter requires facilities for 40-44 individuals each night. In addition to sleeping quarters, there is a need for a kitchen to provide snacks, separate TV room, restrooms, and showers. The group discussed the possibility of using the Walnut Community Room and adding modular units to meet other needs. Mr. Patterson explained that when Scott Zimbrick Memorial Fire Station 5 was closed, the bays were converted into storage for emergency and medical services equipment and a caretaker stays on-site using the kitchen facilities. The overnight occupancy rate for Walnut Community Room is 20, making this location not appropriate for the cold weather shelter.

Mr. Patterson said he requested Corvallis School District 509J and other organizations to explore available facilities. The Homeless Coalition Board recognizes that the best option is to acquire a place that can be made into a proper facility, and they accepted the reasons Walnut Community Room cannot be used.

In response to Councilor Beilstein's inquiry about establishing the cold weather shelter in non-residential space, Mr. Gibb said a church is most appropriate since providing shelter is a customary activity. Establishing a cold weather shelter in an industrial zone could violate Land Development Code (LDC) regulations.

In response to Chair Raymond's inquiry, Mr. Gibb said staff was able to make a determination about housing the cold weather shelter in a church due to the activity

being a customary service by churches. Council cannot arbitrarily override LDC regulations.

Karen Nibler, said she works with Stone Soup. She inquired whether the cold weather shelter allows for a group kitchen and if a special clearance would be needed.

Mr. Patterson said his understanding is that the shelter is more than just a place to sleep. The organization needs a kitchen to provide a snack, have a designated smoking area, separate TV room, and bathrooms. What limits availability are life-safety issues that cannot be bypassed.

Regarding liability issues, Mr. Patterson explained that the Homeless Coalition has insurance and can pay rent. The City tried to make Walnut Community Room work without any obstacles. The Coalition understands that the issues of providing restrooms, kitchen facilities, etc., are the same no matter what facility is used or who owns it. The City's goal was to make a determination about Walnut Community Room quickly so other ideas could be explored if needed. The City is continuing to explore other options, but cannot disregard life-safety or land use issues.

Mr. Patterson confirmed that the Community Development Department will provide information about operating a shelter in an industrial area, warehouse, commercial building, etc., when potential sites are identified. He noted that "reasonable and customary use" can sometimes be a challenge and may require changes to regulations. He said it is unfortunate that the Homeless Coalition is faced with these challenges when they do great work.

In response to Chair Raymond's inquiry about utilizing a hotel that combines rental and commercial, Mr. Gibb said use of commercial space is less problematic. Churches work best since they are an area for public assembly, have kitchens, restrooms, etc.

Mr. Patterson added that the church the Homeless Coalition previously used is no longer available since the church expanded their school program.

The next Human Services Committee meeting is scheduled for 12:00 pm on Tuesday, October 2, 2012 in the Madison Avenue Meeting Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Raymond, Chair