



Mayor's Task Force for Racial & Ethnic Equality

REAL ESTATE & HOUSING SUBCOMMITTEE **MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday, July 21, 2021

3:30 p.m.

Zoom Meeting

Call to Order

AJ Wright, subcommittee co-chair, called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m. Kayla Elson, of Justice & Sustainability Associates, took attendance of participants for the meeting record and reviewed the meeting agenda.

June 16th Meeting Minutes

Parisa Hamzesh, subcommittee member, requested minor edits to the June 16th meeting minutes; the meeting minutes were edited and unanimously approved.

Process Update

Kayla Elson reviewed the process for drafting and presenting the recommendations to the Task Force, Mayor, and City Commission. It is expected that the Task Force will finalize their recommendations by September 2021.

Discussion: Priority One Recommended Ideas

Kayla Elson highlighted the top three policy ideas prioritized among the subcommittee members. The first included developing programs that target the use of vacant lots, second, investing in resources to prioritize code enforcement in the most blighted areas, and third, promoting quality rental housing with incentives or ways to support landlords.

Ontario Davis-Johnson, subcommittee member, highlighted the importance of giving ownership of properties build on vacant lots to the community members. Subcommittee members then discussed some of the barriers to developing on vacant lots. Tiffany David, of the City of West Palm Beach Mayor's Office, clarified that there is a timeframe for development, but developers can get permit extensions if they have not developed yet. Subcommittee members agreed to address city-owned vacant lots then privately-owned lots.

For code enforcement, Ontario Davis-Johnson emphasized increasing the number of inspections required for landlords per year in order to maintain their rental license. Tiffany David shared that in Florida, a law just passed that requires someone to leave their name, address, etc. when they report a code violation if they would like a city to take action. She noted that more code enforcement officers would be needed to carry out increased inspections and that it is hard to keep track of legal renters if they do not



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file their business tax receipts. AJ Wright asked if there was a hotline residents could call to report violations or inspections. Tiffany David explained that there is one, but with the new Florida law, the city will not be able to address calls without any identifying information.

Maricela Torres, subcommittee member, expressed concern about addressing this issue for illegal renters, and Ontario Davis-Johnson asked how the city identifies renters. Tiffany David said that every year, Development Services sends a mailer to all properties registered with the city as residential properties to find out if the property is rented, vacant, or lived in by the owner; it can be illegal if the owner has not filed as a rental property or violated health and sanitary rules. Maricela Torres explained that there are those who rent illegally because they need some form of ID, SSN and a criminal background check that some people do not have. She further stated that usually someone else rents for them and pays that person, which means no proof of renting.

Parisa Hamzesh approved the idea of partnering with schools and youth programs for beautifying neighborhoods under promoting quality rental and housing. Ontario Davis-Johnson suggested idea #3 be split under ideas #1 and #2.

Discussion: Priority Two Recommended Ideas

Kayla Elson highlighted the top two policy ideas prioritized among the subcommittee members. The first revolves around enhancing education and programs around avenues homeownership, the second around prioritizing greater investment in programs to help people purchase homes. Kayla Elson suggested scheduling an additional meeting to parse out the idea details.

Public Comment

Kayla Elson opened the floor for public comment. In addition to this public comment space, there were several comments made in the chat by public participants around the top policy areas. Bill Cross, public attendee, asked the subcommittee to look at the City's Chronic Nuisance Ordinance. He would like to see funding for better code enforcement and money for landlords to improve their house. He suggested one enforcement check should be for health and safety, and the other should be for beautification so as not to harm people who cannot afford to fix beauty-related things. Ontario Davis Johnson commented that the city had a rehab program to get funding to improve their homes, and it should be reinstated.

Next steps

Kayla Elson will schedule another meeting before the regularly scheduled August meeting to discuss the ideas under priority number two.



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Adjournment

Antoinne Wright adjourned the meeting at 5:01 p.m. The next meeting will be on August 18th, 2021, at 3:30 p.m. on Zoom.

ATTENDANCE

Present:

Antoinne Wright, Subcommittee Co-Chair

Ontario Davis Johnson, Subcommittee Member

Parisa Hamzetash, Subcommittee Member

Maricela Torres, Subcommittee Member

Michael Odum, Subcommittee member

Tiffany David, City of West Palm Beach Mayor's Office

Kayla Elson, Justice & Sustainability Associates

Emma Lipsky, Justice & Sustainability Associates

Public:

Jeffrey D Jones

Suzanne Cabrera

Serena Hoermann

William Cross

Absent:

Danita Nias, Subcommittee Co-Chair

Ezra Gene Saffold, Subcommittee Member