

Mar Vista Community Council Renters' Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

The MVCC Renters' Subcommittee (Renters') is a subcommittee of the MVCC Planning and Land Use Committee (PLUM)

July 18th, 2020

1. **Call to order (2:00 pm)**
Order called at 2:05 pm.
2. **Announcements:**
*6 for unmute
Tyler and Annie introduced themselves.
Intros by Andrea (Ambriz), Stacy (Shure), Gabriel (Hill) – Members of the MVCC Board of Directors

2.1 Co-Chair Introductions

2.2 Board of Directors introductions, as necessary

3. Public Comment for Items NOT on This Agenda

Andrea Ambriz: Speak in support in the majority of renters in Mar Vista. Applaud TL and AB leadership. Identify outreach and concerns and perspective. Inclusive of renters. New forms of outreach through surveys, etc.

Kalani Whittington: Language is important. Among the NCs she works with, when speaking about housing, we do not do ourselves a service by saying when we say that we lack for housing. We have a lack of affordable housing. If you don't qualify with the word affordable, people will push back at you. Many large luxury buildings are sitting 50 percent empty. These are investments. They were not built to house people. They were building to make money and money is cheap. They will not drop the prices since they do not want certain types of people living in them. We need to demand that they drop the prices. Those buildings will sit empty because cash is cheap. Insist on affordable housing, not just housing.

Ashley Zeldin: I would ask that the record reflect that we do not have a high vacancy rate in Mar Vista. I would defer to Stacy Shure or Mary Hruska, but I believe it is 3.6 percent. We have entertained in our community plan a percentage that is out or around half affordable housing. Please defer to Stacy or Mary for more accurate numbers.

Stacy Shure: We are at 4.7 percent for the Mar Vista-Palms-Del Mar. At the end of the COVID protections the vacancy rate is at the floor. Its not a matter of units that are market rate but empty units. Our effort is to keep people housed right now.

KW: 10 percent vacancy downtown

4. Reading and Approval of Minutes from previous meeting - December 14th, 2019

TL: Wave reading; AZ second

SS: Recommend that people submit revisions in five days if there are

5. **Unfinished Business and General Orders**

None

6. **New Business –**

AB: Wanted to raise the stance the Board has taken, especially now that we are under the Planning and Land Use Committee meeting and further the awareness of the support the Board has expressed for renters.

6.1 Discussion about board motion expressing support for renter protections

The MVCC Renters Subcommittee will discuss with attendees the recent motion passed by the MVCC Board of Directors at the June 12th, 2020 Board meeting expressing support of rent relief for renters. The motion, as amended and approved by the Board, is the following:

“Los Angeles is in the middle of a pandemic and a public health crisis. Every aspect of our lives and City has been impacted by COVID-19. The Governor and Mayor have issued stay-at-home orders. Millions, who have been forced out of work, are not able to earn a living. The virus has claimed over 100,000 lives and has changed our communities for the foreseeable future.

Currently, many states and cities have eviction moratoriums in place for individuals impacted by COVID-19; however, the moratorium that the City of Los Angeles has implemented does not go far enough to offer Rent and Mortgage Relief. People need to know that they will be protected and will not be thrown out of their homes.

Elected officials from multiple U.S. cities - Boston, New Orleans, New York City, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, St. Paul and right here in Los Angeles - have stood up and joined the call for State and Federal legislators to provide rent and mortgage relief during the duration of this crisis.

We, the Mar Vista Community Council, on behalf of a proud, diverse, and inclusive Westside Community, stand with our stakeholders, neighbors, family, and friends in supporting City-wide rent and mortgage relief, as provided for in Congresswoman Ilhan Omar’s proposed Congressional Bill, Emergency Rent and Mortgage Cancellation Legislation, that provides for rent and mortgage forgiveness.”

This motion was itemized as item 12.3 on the June 12th, 2020 MVCC Board meeting agenda.

6.2 Discussion of resources for renters facing potential eviction due to COVID-19 economic impacts

Whereas, on a teleconference call which took place on March 17, 2020 with DONE General Manager Rachel Beltran and Mayor Eric Garcetti, several key points were made about the role of Neighborhood Councils during the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- helping stakeholders address the economic concerns resulting from the closure of businesses due to the Stay at Home order, i.e. loss of income, inability to pay rent and utilities, etc.

- figuring out new and innovative ways to help the community and encouraging stakeholders to help their neighbors, especially those at high risk for COVID-19

The Renters' Committee will discuss information and resources for renters affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Research produced by UCLA Luskin indicates that of the almost 600,000 people who became unemployed due to COVID-19, about 450,000 live in rental housing. When eviction moratoriums are ended, a steep increase in evictions are expected which could result in displacement of Mar Vista residents and further increases in rates of homelessness. We will discuss what resources and education are needed by renters who are facing housing instability in order to protect Mar Vista renters. Local organizations are invited to share about resources for renters concerned about evictions.

GH: Renters' relief program in LA; I do think they may extend the program; it's a lottery and then names are draw, whoever gets it gets, if there is more money, they will start it back up

SS: The first round of funding will be extending by this week's lottery; 1.2 billion has been requested for rent and mortgage relief with the cooperation of banks. Newsom and Garcetti will not appropriate that money. If the HEROES Act is passed, funds will be released. Mayor and Governor waiting for Congress to act. Not overly optimistic. We don't know whether or not case load will increase to shut down the economy. If the Gov does a statewide rollback, then will need more funds. Nothing tells us what. Could pass a statement demanding action. Could pass a motion to address this by letter.

AZ: I would love that if we were to draft a letter or policy statement. For example, my upstairs neighbor had to break his lease and someone else is moving in. Other people are having to break lease and leave.

Nancee LATU: My understanding as well, people are looking for more to happen. Owners are not required to accept payment. A lot of tenants' groups are against the renters relief because it is inadequate.

AB: Attempts to have amendments made?

SS: We have Maxine Water's plan. Everyone is betting on Cong. Ilhan Omar. We will not have clarity that would be of benefit to homeowners or tenants. Encourage people to show up wherever we can. We need help and we need it now. How are they going to pay back even on a rent payment plan? We need everybody to put pressure. I encourage everybody to start sending letters. We need more funds now. Governor Newsom been reticent to dip into. We need to take action to get our voices heard. I don't think we will get a tremendous about of notice when judicial rules are repealed. We should have money in place before then.

AB: Curious to hear what LATU (Los Angeles Tenants Union) is doing to prep. Are there efforts with the Westside chapter of LATU. Are there specific resources we should be documenting and sharing?

N LATU: We are working very hard to prepare for this. Very concerned about the judicial council. We are fighting for longer time periods. Normally only five days to answer a summons, so fighting for a longer time period. Extend a lot of those time periods. A lot to be done. Please refer people to LATU or other groups. Encourage people to see this not as an individual crisis, we encourage people to first come together as neighbors and then in larger structures. Tell people to not sign any agreement. Things are changing on a daily basis. Do not sign any agreement and do not move. Legally you are protected right now. Is the WRAC meeting public?

SS: Anyone can attend WRAC meetings. Look for WRAC meeting website. Women's Lawyers guild is hold free clinics once a month to help tenants rep themselves and understand rights. Papers on LATU website that tenants can post to protect themselves. Through POWER and Buenos Vecinos beginning to restage

and rehost self-help legal clinics and get prepared for eviction and what is happening in the courts. We expect by August new dates. I am working with Bill from POWER LA.

AB: Something we would be interested in supported. Would it be appropriate to invite people and hold something?

SS: Absolutely. Will have Bill and Women's Guild contact TL and AB

AB: Can we attached these resources to minutes?

SS: Absolutely. Have 22/24 people about call for illegal lockouts. Inner City law center not doing trainings. Eviction Defense Network sometimes hosts trainings.

N LATU: National Lawyers guild Ask an Attorney, Thursdays at 5 pm. LATU has guides. Final thing I would like to add as far as helping tenants is to be very discerning during this meaning. A lot of info to absorb and its good to be discerning.

KW: Temple Beth Senek is providing resources. One can received legal advice in WeHo and help with evictions from Tenants Legal Group. Plumber Park.

SS: Get tenants trained and mobilize volunteers to help people when judicial rules change. In SE US, where evictions have started, had people come down from NE and MW to help.

KW: Does this committee have a guide?

SS: LATU FB page

AB: We have a few links. Will seek guidance as to what we can put up there

SS: We can post letters. Just ask we could link to the MVCC website

AB: We have a couple of ideas, one is to write a policy statement. I am also wondering if there are...I know there are a limited number of orgs that help people before eviction. Can we use neighborhood purpose grants?

SS: Bringing NPG grand for Westside Power with Bill P. We just haven't brought the NPG forward. As long it is a nonprofit, we can bring an NPG forward.

KW: NPGs cannot help private households. We cannot favor one or the other. We if start opening ourselves up to renters.

AB: If people were interested in providing education and legal advice, that is who we want to support. Tenants Union, Inner City Law Center, Tenants Together, POWER, Jorge Rivera, National Lawyers Guild, Eviction Defense Network. I can send you guys a list of these organizations. I would leave it up to you who you want an NPG for. Power working with me on Mitchell and Wade.

GH: Asked a question for Nancee about negotiating with landlords. Can you provide information on how people should do that?

N LATU: We encourage tenants not to negotiate and not to sign anything. We encourage people to come together with people in their building to form an association and represent together. Food not rent guide. It's very stressful and overwhelming so urge them to become part of another group. What we need now is people to become more involved, informed and active.

GH: Been just forwarding people to LATU.

N LATU: LATU does not accept grants to free up funds for other groups.

AA: Offer the support and collaboration of the Ad Hoc COVID committee. This conversation is due to COVID. If you wanted to work together on NPGs or other resources. The NPG process requires more than other Boards.

SS: Anything that arises out of discussion can call for action.

TL: Let's work on a policy statement. How should we go about this?

KW: We encourage you to continue your efforts in seeking funds and fully supports continued efforts.

SS: I would do something like we recognize funds have been extended. The MVCC encourages city council to urge the Mayor to free up more funds.

Draft statement for a letter:

The Mar Vista Community Council, on behalf of the stakeholders of Mar Vista, exhorts the Los Angeles City Council to ask the Mayor of Los Angeles to free up additional funds through the Emergency Rent Assistance Program started the week of July 13th, 2020.

(Policy statement ultimately not drafted during this meeting)

N LATU: We are for cancelling rent and not in favor

SS: \$1.2 billion is needed to cancel rent and mortgages.

AB: The Board passed a motion regarding rent forgiveness and mortgage forgiveness and amended it to relief.

SS: We need to do a better job of communicating, but I do not think we should give up or stop asking for it.

AZ: Could we agendize and FAQ?

SS: Use a free resource at the renters committee. The more times we say it, the more likely they will get it.

SS: Invite Councilmember Bonin to talk about what it would take to get rent relief and forgiveness. But let's not make it a town hall. I want it to be a collaborative effort.

AB: More helpful to learn what is going on behind the scenes. Do we want to pass a motion at this meeting?

SS: Have as many meetings as you want.

TL: Let's push this to another meeting

KW: We have already stated what we wanted, appreciate relief but want forgiveness

6.3 Discussion of possible action to request an MVCC Request for Action to stop LAPD involvement in illegal evictions

The Renters' Subcommittee will discuss asking the MVCC Board of Directors to send a Request for Action letter to Councilmembers Koretz and Bonin asking that they take immediate action to prohibit LAPD involvement in illegal evictions while the moratorium on evictions for the duration of the COVID-19

emergency and limit LAPD responsibility to ensuring tenants' right to housing and safety during the COVID-19 emergency.

SS: 53 cases of illegal evictions. Landlord will evict and call the police and or lock out tenant and then call the police. Disproportionate use of force. Organized and moderated Koretz's staff. Nothing happened from this meeting. Shopping among council members. One councilmember reached out but only wants to pass this ordinance for political reasons. Council Pres Martinez reached out. SS will be talking to Martinez office on Monday morning and Rodriguez Monday afternoon. Is not an ordinance, could just be a letter to LAPD. Will have more news by next week for a special meeting.

6.4 Discussion of possible action to draft a new mission statement for the Renters' Committee.

As of the July 14, 2020 MVCC Board of Directors meeting, the Renters' Subcommittee has been reconstituted as a subcommittee of the MVCC Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee. This item is for discussion about a new mission statement reflecting the Renters' Subcommittee's new position within the MVCC. The previous statement is as follows:

"The mission of the Renter's Subcommittee of the Outreach Committee is to best encourage and promote outreach to and engagement with the rental community (renters and housing providers) in the Mar Vista Community Council and its committees. "

AB: Amend to be a subcommittee of PLUM. Would like to see us and engagement but reflect the mission of PLUM as a subcommittee of PLUM. Is the PLUM mission on the MVCC website?

New text: "The mission of the Renters' Subcommittee of the Mar Vista Community Council's PLUM Committee is to promote engagement with stakeholders of Mar Vista who are renters, and to maximize their representation on the community council. This subcommittee works to accomplish this mission through renters' input, participation and education."

KW: Facilitate a mutual benefit between tenants and landlords in the Mar Vista area by assisting with information and mediation

AB: The PLUM missions statement reads "The PLUM Committee shall promote community input and involvement in land use, planning, beautification and appropriately sized public, commercial and residential development in the Mar Vista region, and provide recommendations to the MVCC Board of Directors regarding such issues, in order to improve the health and quality of life for MVCC stakeholders."

The things that stick out to me is community input and involvement and education

AZ: What was the guidance from the chair?

TL: None

SS: The key role is to ensure renters have a voice. You are under PLUM since

KW: What about advocacy

SS: Not for advocacy. Just avoid the word

TL: Motion to pass this mission statement as written

AZ: I move to adopt this mission statement as written.

GH: Second

SS: Consideration for future meetings: input on transitional student housing. Need some data on how many students live in the UCLA Sawtelle and Sepulveda developments. It's a neglected area and we shouldn't lose students. If we can do so before community plan update process is complete, we should have on input on special zoning.

KW: Great idea. Friend's wife went through the program and had to move. I think it's 30 days to move out.

7. **Adjourn** (no later than 3:30 pm)

Adjourned 3:38