

# Minutes

Housing Committee  
Monday, July 18, 2022  
6:30 p.m.  
City Council Chambers  
Municipal Building, Jamestown, New York

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councilwoman Carrubba, Councilman Sheldon, Regina Brackman

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: Clerk/Treasurer Jennifer Williams, Director of Development Crystal Surdyk, Associate Corporation Counsel Ben Haskin

Councilwoman Carrubba called the meeting to order.

## Public Comment

Mike Brezner of J&M Property Rentals, residential address 1652 Martin Road; owner of 21 multi-family properties with 58 tenants appeared before the Housing Committee to speak regarding the three proposed ordinances. He asked the committee to not rush into the ordinances, but take their time and really work through legislation with local landlords to ensure it can work in the city. The burden is put on the landlords in the ordinances when it should be on the tenant for much of the incidents that occur on the property. Mr. Brezner is quite worried that the new ordinances will cause additional blight in the City of Jamestown. He called for a landlord registration list in the City of Jamestown.

Mr. Haskin responded that there is a current landlord registration in the City of Jamestown. Those who have not registered their properties are in violation of the law.

Ms. Surdyk corrected that the proposed ordinances are merely in the discussion phase and not intended to be voted on during the City Council voting session in July. This is the first discussion with council to glean feedback. A date will be announced soon to meet with the REIA, City Council Housing Committee and members from the Healthy Housing Taskforce to discuss the proposed ordinances. She also noted that a newer Landlord Registration Ordinance was passed in roughly 2018. The new ordinances will replace the previous Landlord Registration Ordinance moving forward. She reiterated that the REIA input is important to this process as it moves forward.

Councilwoman Carrubba noted that there are many communities that conduct point of sale inspections. When someone purchases a home, they will be aware of all of the things that need to be corrected. This is for any sale at any property, not just rental properties. The hope is that

properties that are deteriorating aren't resold and never brought to code. The expense is far less to correct these problems before they get to the point of no return. The goal is to put a stop to blight and improve the housing in the City of Jamestown.

Doug Champ of 225 Bowen Street, Jamestown addressed the Housing Committee to express his gratitude for the actions being taken to address the housing stock in Jamestown. One key point he discussed was that new housing has not been built in the city for quite some time. He attributed the cause to the rezoning of the neighborhoods to allow for multi-family rental units. These units decrease the property value of neighboring properties. He noted that the city is lacking skilled laborers to bring units to code; in addition, the funding available for the projects isn't nearly enough for the job to be finished properly. He fears the projects will be rushed and the work will be done incorrectly, specifically with the electrical needs as New York State moves to require electric appliances.

Mr. Haskin noted responded to many of Mr. Champs comments including, noting that estimates on properties were made by an inspector that has been used on many projects and wholesale purchases in and around the City of Jamestown. Mr. Haskin noted that the department has been selective in the projects chosen for refurbishment. These projects were chosen as they did not require brand new plumbing, electric, etc. The hope is to gain a small profit on properties that don't require as much assistance and funding and put the profit toward projects that are more expensive. He used 810 as an example; it cannot be occupied until the porch is demoed and replaced, but the other issues are more aesthetic, meaning the expenditure is not all coming from the 19-A program. Corrections will be made to the property to make it livable, find a first-time homebuyer who meets the economic criterion for the HOME Program and the federal funding can assist with the remainder of improvements. Mr. Haskin is very proud of this program and hopes to put some concerns to rest.

Mr. Champ thanked Mr. Haskin for his explanation but still maintained concerns surrounding the ability to keep neighborhoods from going downhill.

Mr. Haskin spoke to his concerns by explaining that the 19-A properties are all over the city and each property was chosen to bolster the neighborhoods or provide "clusters" of well-maintained homes to build up each neighborhood they are in.

Ms. Surdyk reiterated that much planning has gone into selecting each property.

Councilwoman Carrubba urged those not wishing to address the committee publicly, to reach out to any member of the Housing Committee or members of the Department of Development to discuss ideas and concerns.

Harold Whitford, office address of 853 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Jamestown, resident of Frewsburg appeared before the Housing Committee in his capacity as the President of the Real Estate Investors Association to address a certain stipulation in the Landlord Registration Program. They don't mind the landlord registration because they would like to be contacted in an

emergency. In the past a large problem was that the emergency responders were unable to contact the landlords when the City Clerk's office was closed. They would like JPD, JFD, 911 operators to be able to access the list for use. He would like to see homeowners to register as well to be used in emergency situations as well. Mr. Whitford felt the nuisance ordinance does not adequately address tenant responsibility. As it currently reads, they are not held accountable.

Mr. Haskin and Ms. Surdyk noted that the Department of Development has been working with landlords to get the names of tenants in the building and sending appearance tickets to them as well as landlords to answer for the code violations. It was also noted that the \$100 appearance fee has been repealed. The only time fees are assessed are in court when the judge imposes a fine.

Mr. Whitford is requesting that buildings not be shut down due to one bad tenant. That tenant should be held accountable and the landlord should not be punished.

Mr. Haskin noted that per the proposed ordinance; language was added that any condemnation under the nuisance statute should be limited to the point of the origin to the nuisance and not to the entire house.

Taylor Bennett, a local realtor from 1110 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Jamestown, appeared before the Housing Committee to express his concern over the lack of manpower employed to perform the housing inspections.

Ms. Surdyk noted that they have been in contact with other municipalities that have implemented these programs to see how they handled the work load and how they created an inspection check list. The goal is to allow the buyers and the sellers to be aware of all of the code violations so they are fully aware of what to expect from the property.

Mr. Bennett expressed his concern on the lack of plumbers in the area. Homes are being rehabbed and ready to be sold/rented but without plumbers there is a large bottleneck and delays. He requested that some of the regulations be relaxed a bit to allow for smaller repairs to be made by contractors and not solely licensed master plumbers.

Councilwoman Carrubba noted that New York State requires many of the inspections and regulations for their properties. Many people are not aware of new regulations etc.

He also expressed his concern that many properties should not be put in the housing auction. These homes are in need of so much more rehab than they are given and will just end up contributing to the neighborhood blight and will back on the tax auction in a year or two.

Councilwoman Carrubba thanked everyone who contributed to the evening's conversation and apologized that they ran out of time for everyone to speak. Mr. Haskin noted that he was able to impart many of the items he wished to get across. More to come in the full work session.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Jennifer R. Williams  
City Clerk/Treasurer