



City of Bristol
Bristol, Connecticut

FAIR RENT COMMISSION

Wednesday, August 28, 2024 at 6:00 PM
Bristol City Hall
111 N. Main Street, 3rd Floor
Conference Room 3-1,3-2,3-3
Bristol, Connecticut

MINUTES

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jon FitzGerald at 6:01 PM.

2. Introduction of commissioners.

Present: Adam Brothwell (H), Cristina Costa (T), Brian Brown (L), Brian Brady (H), Tim Gamache (T), Chairman Jon FitzGerald.

Also in attendance: Scott Matney, Maria Theam, Tyra Smith, and Ted Lazarus.

3. Seating of alternates.

Commissioner Adam Brothwell filled in as an alternate for Commissioner Susan Pyzynski, who was not present to vote.

4. Discussion and approval of the minutes of May 22, 2024 and take any action as necessary.

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Tim Gamache and seconded by Commissioner Brian Brady. All in favor. Motion carries and minutes from May 22, 2024 are approved.

5. Hearing on the fair rent complaint in the matter of Tyra Smith (Tenant) and Bristol Master Tenant LLC and Bristol Enterprises LLC (Landlord) and to take any action as necessary.

Ms. Tyra Smith raised 15 concerns regarding her rental property. In response, code enforcement inspected the property, and Chairman Jon FitzGerald reviewed their findings with the parties. Ms. Tyra Smith read a letter requesting that her mention of the landlord's investigation for fraud

be removed from her original complaint, as she had received a cease and desist order. Her initial rent was \$1,250 with an additional \$150 utility fee, and it was recently increased to \$1,488.

Ms. Smith expressed concerns about a lack of staff, an unresponsive leasing office, and poor communication. She appreciated the repairs made after her complaints but is seeking a month-to-month lease until the end of October. She attempted to discuss the matter with Ted, but he was unavailable. She emphasized that her statements were based on facts, and it was not her intention to spread any defamation.

Commissioner Brian Brown abstained from voting due to a personal connection with someone living in the building.

Mr. Ted Lazarus appeared on behalf of the landlord and submitted a letter sent to Ms. Smith into the record. He stated that the landlord was unaware of Ms. Smith's concerns until the fair rent complaint was filed. Mr. Lazarus noted that the rent increase of 5% was applied to all tenants and was modest. He also mentioned that two inspections found no mold in Ms. Smith's apartment.

Ms. Smith contested this, stating she was instructed to text the maintenance man rather than submit written complaints. She also expressed concerns about the inability to open windows for ventilation. While she did not object to the rent increase, she sought clarification on its rationale and requested a month-to-month lease due to stress and ongoing health issues.

The landlord preferred not to have tenants on month-to-month leases to avoid finding new tenants during winter. Commissioner Brian Brady inquired if an exception could be made for Ms. Smith due to her health concerns. Her lease is set to end on September 8, 2024. Ms. Smith mentioned she discovered the lease renewal letter upon returning from Georgia on July 31, 2024.

Chairman Jon FitzGerald initiated a discussion among the commissioners, noting that the rent increase issue was moot and that all complaints had been addressed. After reviewing the options, Commissioner Adam Brothwell moved to deny the complaint, citing that the rent increase was not excessive or unreasonable. Commissioner Brian Brady seconded the motion, which was then carried.

6. Public participation.

None.

7. Discussion by commissioners of old business and take any action as necessary.

None.

8. Discussion by commissioners of new business and take any action as necessary.

Chairman Jon FitzGerald discussed the eviction process and suggested a motion to refrain from intervening in complaints once a notice to quit has been filed in court. The motion was so moved by Commissioner Cristina Costa and seconded by Commissioner Tim Gamache. Motion carries.

Per the ordinance, procedures need City Council approval. Chairman Jon FitzGerald asked for recommendations on what should be included in the procedures submitted to the council.

9. Discussion by commissioners of meeting dates and agendas and take any action as necessary.

Chairman Jon FitzGerald shared that our next meeting is scheduled for September 25, 2024 and there are currently two complaints.

10. Adjournment.

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Brady and seconded by Commissioner Gamache. The meeting adjourned at 6:44 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Maria Theam, recording secretary.