

Affordable Housing Taskforce

- June 6, 2018-

Board of Alders Chamber New Haven City Hall

Members in Attendance: Erin Kemple, Serena Neal-Sanjurjo, Otis Johnson, Karen Dubois-Walton, Bonita Grubbs, Edward Mattison, Dolores Colon, Aaron Greenberg

Alder Aaron Greenberg, the task force's non-voting facilitator, called the meeting to order at 5:30. He noted that according to the latest report from the Partnership for Strong Communities, 57 percent of renters and 40 percent of homeowners in New Haven spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. He further pointed out that the National Low Income Housing Coalition had determined that New Haven's "housing wage," or the hourly wage needed to afford a two-bedroom in the city is \$25.48, or about \$50,000 a year and thus the disparity between what it takes to afford a two-bedroom unit in New Haven and what residents actually make means low-income families are forced to live in substandard homes because it is all they can afford, or it is because their poor credit prevents them from finding better homes. He added that the task force was created to do research and address this crisis and that this meeting was just the beginning. He began taking public testimony:

Alder Evette Hamilton- 327 Edgewood Avenue: noted that support is needed for SRO and affordable housing. The 666 Norton condemnation sent 48 families all over the city and disrupted lives of families and children. Landlords not offering affordable apartments. You have to make six figure income to leave here. She noted that a resident named Allison Parks who needed a 3 bedroom after the crisis at 66 Norton was not offered a 3-bedroom apartment and Could only get 2 bedrooms. Residents here deserve and have a right to live in decent apartments.

Alder Greenberg- thanked her and recognized the other public officials.

Rebecca Corbett- 616 Winthrop Avenue: testified that she was a student on welfare with 4 children and used the rental assistance program. She moved into a home in Morris Cove then things fell apart. The landlord was never around basement flooded with 2-3 feet of water. LCI came and called fire marshal but the problem was never resolved and then there were more and more problems. As long as it looked like he was working they would let him off the hook. The ceiling collapsed. Landlords should have time limits for fixing problem increase penalties for landlords that ignore problems.

Alison Cunningham of Columbus House, 585 Ella T. Grasso Blvd.: testified on behalf of the Coordinated Access Network, which represents providers of services and housing for those who are homeless. Cunningham said that the number of homeless people in New Haven hasn't gone down significantly from the last point-in-time survey taken January 2017. In January 2018's survey, there were 529 people counted, which represented 378 single people, 54 people in families, and 97

children. The issues are dire for people who live in poverty. Poverty is the single most leading factor for people that are homeless.

Jim Pettinelli – Coordinated Access Network: We have a report on new innovative and creative housing. There is a lot of work to do, a lot for all of us to do. Some of that work is in creating more “deeply affordable” housing through possible private development set-asides; through requirements for people earning between \$10,000 and \$30,000 annually; by examining zoning regulations to maximize all available options for deeply affordable housing specifically for SROs; and through the conversion of city-owned properties and lands into affordable housing. He also suggested that better interventions for people living outdoors including a recognition and response to the opioid crises because there are new people experiencing homelessness because of it with different needs. A better solution and understanding of those who gather on the Green and that panhandling and homelessness are not necessarily the same thing. Need to address transportation in and around downtown. He noted the group will support this effort and be a resource.

William Morico- 470 Ellsworth Avenue: testified that he is a New Haven Native. He grew up on Winthrop Avenue and then moved to Congress Avenue house his aunt owned. The moved to the Congress Avenue house above Jacks drug store. This was the old housing pattern before corporatization and monetization of inner city housing. The Problem is not just a SRO housing problem; it is decent well-built housing for all income groups. We need a tenants’ union to fight corporate landlords. We need to focus on definition of affordable and for which groups. Decent housing is needed for both low and moderate income people and best way to provide it is to raise income of all workers. No one should pay more than 30% of income for housing. There should be increased enforcement of housing building and health codes, so hire staff to perform those duties, we need triple the staff we have now. He urged enforcing the fines for violations and use of eminent domain if violators do not pay the fines. He suggested increasing the fines and fees to cover cost of enforcement and remediation of violation. He states that the budget should reflect that.

Kimberly Hart, 355 Sherman Avenue, 3rd Floor, Member of Mothers and Others for Justice: testified that she was homeless for 2 ½ years because she couldn’t afford to pay rent and utilities. She wondered if the city has inclusionary zoning? She mentioned Tampa project of \$1 dollar per square foot land trust. She stated people are moving to Waterbury and Meriden because people can’t afford to live here.

Lukas Moe- 75 Clark Street, member of Local 33 union for graduate teachers: testified that it is unaffordable to live downtown even for people with good jobs. Yale hiked rates on graduate student housing. For example, at Whitehall apartments for 2 bedrooms on Prospect and Mansfield rate was \$1,258 a month last school year now its \$1500 dollars. He noted it is the same issue on Mansfield Street where the rent went from \$1,220 to \$1,400. He noted the effect of this could be pushing out students to compete in market of surrounding neighborhoods such as Newhallville.

Elizabeth Rosenthal – Deputy Director of New Haven Legal Assistance, 426 State Street- explained that her agency represents the poor and elderly. She noted the agency provided data in a report including that there are 300 families on waiting list for 3 or larger bedroom apartments for section 8 and more than 2500 on the waiting list and that there are other subsidized housing waiting list. She said the focus of the owners has been on the family with subsidy so others are not getting assistance.

She stated that 57% are rent burdened with more than 30% of their income going for rent. She added that most people are 1 adverse event away from homelessness. She said she is Look forward to working with the taskforce.

Douglas Losty- 605 Valley Street New Haven, President Greater New Haven Property Association: testified that his family goes back to before civil war. He expressed that the tax burden is a problem. He also noted that the recent tax increase will result in \$25-\$50 increases in rents because landlords can't absorb it all after a revaluation last year. He stated that net taxation went up on about 2/3 of the owners in the city and that tenants pay for fines and fees. He said in the rental market there is not racial discrimination but definitely economic discrimination. He explained that by saying for example, standard working poor family cannot afford rents in East Rock. He noted that his group argues with Livable City Initiative over excessive code enforcement. He said he will submit rest of testimony via email.

Paul Keriakos, 15 Nettle Drive, Woodbridge- testified that he owns properties in New Haven. He stated that taxes increase year over year and that puts pressure to keep up. He said the solution must consider economic development and include a strong workforce. That he said will give a base for affordable housing

Cordalie Benoit, 19 Court Street, Board of Assessment Appeals member - testified that she was hearing excellent suggestions. She said she noticed through her role on the Board of Assessment Appeals a discrepancy in what single family owners pay in taxes per floor space compared to apartment owners. She suggested looking into why homeowner pay more than apartment people. She added that we have to look to surrounding towns to assist as the solution is not coming just in the city.

Justin Farmer, 231 Butler Street Hamden CT, Hamden City Councilperson, Gen Action Intern Planned Parenthood: testified that he was working on affordable housing. He noted everything connects to housing. He explained Hamden has a zoning formula which says take lower of state or town median income and then 30% of that to figure out the rent. He said by that formula using state guidelines rent should be \$1700 but using New Haven as the guideline the rent would be \$950. He said one can't find affordable housing in Newhallville. He stated the we have to work with agencies, renters and community to address this issue.

Myles White, Main Street, West Haven: testified that the vast number of able bodies that live in New Haven and West Haven are ready to work. He said he has seen properties that could be a part of this solution. He stated he likes Habitat for Humanity and other action oriented entities that take solutions to the property. He said the city should take advantage of able bodies which would be good for morale. People would work for the necessities to refurbish these homes and industrial space. He stated there is no need for more restaurants and bars.

Garry Monk, 143 Fountain Terrace, National Veterans Council for Legal Redress: testified that the issue affects veterans, especially the homeless, seniors and disabled. He introduced Aaron Charles of DBLS Homes and Next Step Creative Group.

Aaron Charles, DBLS Homes and Next Step Creative Group, stated that his agency builds communities. The agency has built one in Bronx and converted an industrial building in Bridgeport.

He noted they are doing a pilot program in Philadelphia to build small homes. 600-700 sq. ft. He explained these homes can be temporary, transitional or permanent housing for homeless veterans. He stated they have a project in Florida which is the first set of affordable apartments by Habitat for Humanity. He stated that he would love to do something here.

Yonatan Zamir, a staff attorney with the New Haven Legal Assistance Association, 426 State Street, told the task force that the city can't rely on the private marketplace to self-enforce housing code and meet minimum standards. He explained that LCI, Building and Health are not functioning up to what could be as it relates to the city's older housing stock which is riddled with lead paint. He stated that the Health Department is not effective enforcing authority.

Liam Brennan and Amy Eppler-Epstein, New Haven Legal Assistance: testified about how to increase affordable housing. They agreed there is a need especially with the low percentage of 3 and 4 bedroom units that are need more here than in the state at large. They noted that leads to families competing for large units. As a result, there are low vacancy rates. They added SRO's are naturally affordable housing. They stated that they welcome chance to work with you.

Alder Greenberg thanked Legal Assistance for the memo and asked if there are any legal barriers to allowing inclusive zoning?

Liam Brennan – responded that no its expressly granted.

Amy Eppler-Epstein-responded this is time for that given the building boom.

Gary Doyens- 30 Birch Drive New Haven: testified that he found it a mockery to have this taskforce after the Board of Alders imposed tax hike which drove up costs of rents. He stated we have to address inequity in city budget. He noted that bringing the budget under control will provide more affordable housing.

Reverend Elise Hamling, Assistant Rector, Trinity Church, 950 Chapel Street: testified that they witness the crisis firsthand through people in need of assistance down payment, rental, utilities knocking on the church door every day. She recounted how working with a church member that was recently evicted demonstrated to her that it's a full time job to navigate the system. She stated her church is ready to hear how it can work together to be a part of the solution.

Urn Pendragon, resident of New Haven. Full time student, testified that they are a working on masters and interned for economic development on inclusionary zoning. They testified that Inclusionary Zoning can help but it requires commitment and needs resources and services to address the problem. Explained that Inclusionary Zoning is a nationwide solution and that California, Massachusetts and New Jersey made mandatory for the entire state. They noted that since there is always economic or racial disparity that are different it is customizable to every city or state. They noted they would forward research to the taskforce and added that Rhode Island has a handbook on it and gives density bonuses.

Anderson Curtis- testified he has no address and lives with ex -wife. He said he manages a sober house and independent living facility in Fair Haven. He stated that the building SROs would help with sustainability takes care of, helps people and gives them something to hold on to it. He said it

creating buy in for occupants is important. He said the city may need to have liaisons to help people keep the SROs up.

Ian Skoggard, 42 Cleveland Road- testified that having a homes are better for learning environment better for children and their performance in school. He stated that affordable housing mitigates issues but Affordable here is not actually affordable. He said the current measures of affordability leave people out. He stated that he once lived in a rent controlled apartment in New York for 95\$ but that changed with President Reagan's administration.

Achte Pentair- 175 Nicoll Street: testified that he was a cardiologist and medical researcher studying relationship between housing insecurity and health. He stated that exposure to heat cold mold etcetera exacerbate existing other problems and social issues like food access and health access. He noted that lack of housing affordability makes it hard to manage everything else health wise.

Steven Polland – 21 Anderson Street: he noted in his neighborhood there are new market rate luxury condos going in. He said its problematic they are not mandated to have 20-25% affordable units. He stated this re-segregates the city racially and economically and leads to displacement. He said the lower income worker is pushed out of the city and has to commute from farther distances. He stated that Yale has to be held accountable.

Charlie Delgado, 6D Catherine Way: testified that he grew up in Newhallville and now lives where he doesn't have to worry about fluctuating rents. He explained that means his family has money to spend or save. He stated that people need opportunities to escape that poverty. He added that now in Newhallville Winchester Rents are unaffordable.

ERIC MOSTRIANI - former candidate for Governor and State Representative, stated that we have to hold landlords accountable and have them hold their rents down. He said the People are the greatest assets. He said housing goes with jobs. He urged listening to the people as they live it every day.

Joshua Van Hoesen, 50 Morris Causeway: testified that the City places burden on residents with situations like a car getting towed because tax bill went to wrong town. He stated fighting Traffic ticket for a law that no one can explain adds up every day.

LaShonda Cruz ,199 Franklin Street Apt 408: testified she was interested in Farnam Court status and why they move out half and not rest of families. She stated that it was unsafe and unsanitary with mildew and now her daughter has asthma. She stated they are stressed and overwhelmed. Shy asked for help for the families in need right now. She expressed concern about the construction going on and kids playing as unsafe. She said there is shooting every week but you can't run because you'll hit a dead end or get hit by a train. She said she believes in and has faith in God and the taskforce.

Karen Dubois Walton- Committed to follow up about the unit. She explained that the Housing Authority also wants to clear entire site but has been prevented from clearing it. She added that they are working on it and reemphasize she shared the concerns.

Chaz Carmon, New Haven native and President of the anti-gang violence organization Ice the Beef, testified that he is disturbed by how easy it is for low-income people to slip through the cracks when

it comes to maintaining stable housing. He said he knew firsthand the value of low income and affordable housing: He grew up in affordable housing has two degrees and works in the school system as a paraprofessional. He stated the Section 8 has to stay low. He explained how hard it is for a single father because you are a guy. He recounted the story of his friend who lost his children after getting cancer. He stated the people in his field make very little money and live check to check. He said there had been times where he and his child needed to go into a shelter but he couldn't get into a shelter that took families because they only accepted women and their children. He and his child have housing now but because of his work in the community he often takes others in. He said could have moved to Waterbury or Meriden where it's cheaper but as a leader fighting for youth working against gang and gun violence he decided to stay to better. He said just like the puritan's people move to New Haven for a better life. He stated developers need to have a percentage of units for low income housing and control the prices.

Lee Parker – 992 Whalley Avenue, Mothers and Other for Justice – testified that his experience through Fellowship Place shows that supportive housing can work. He states that he been able to be as CFO and cashier thanks to affordable supportive housing.

Amber Seuss- 415 Frontage Avenue, testified that she is a leader in New Haven Rising. She told her story of how she struggled to find affordable housing and landed couch searching and then had to live with four roommates in order to afford an apartment. She said her organization advocates for the following 4 policies: 1) Inclusionary Housing requiring affordable units 2) Impact Fees for developers that don't meet #1 and those fees go into a city trust 3) revision of the affordability metric and 4) significantly increased fined and number of inspections. She noted that Stamford, Norwalk and Hamden already require between 5 and 10 % be affordable and that New Haven needs a higher number.

Jonathan Hopkins- 426 Norton Parkway: testified that there are broader issues around affordability and thus there are four choices: reform, status quo, isolation or independence. He provided history of how New Haven went from slow agrarian town with inactive port to active bustling metropolitan area in 100 years. He stated just as in earlier time the wealth is still exported out of town and out of state. He agreed to forward his written testimony.

Anstress Farwell -129 Church Street, President Urban Design League: started testifying by thanking the taskforce for taking this on. She noted it requires a broad strategy to address. She said there needed to be a deep inventory of city properties that could be used for affordable housing. She said start with things the city owns so can put requirements in RFP for affordability. She said God blesses the child that has its own. She suggested creating a community land trust and urged transportation reform through updating the zoning ordinance to change parking requirements to reduce costs that are passed on the residents.

Dorthula Greer- 30 Beers Street: testified that she learned how awful the situation is when the 66 Norton Street happened and a family had to move to a single room at a hotel. She said it saddened here me to see there is nothing available for families that was affordable anything they found was too expensive. She thanked the taskforce and urged holding LCI accountable to make sure it advocates for the residents.

Kerry Ellington- 1375 Chapel Street- testified about her story as a graduate of Quinnipiac University who looked for affordable housing and first moved to Norton Street because it was a working class community. She stated she worked at many non-profits and community organizing. She said she sees Pike buying up neighborhood to prepare to gentrify it. She said many residents can't move because landlords won't show you the apartment without good credit, pay stubs that say you can afford and 2 months' security. She said that means that sometimes you have to have 2000-4000 dollars to be able to move out. She said that is hard for working class people and working class professionals with families and the unemployed. She stated that Pike moved everyone out that has subsidies, neglects routine maintenance, and has moved the rent from \$650 to \$1200.

Claudette Kidd - 447 Ferry Street: testified that she came to New Haven as a teacher then had an accident that led to a disability and is now Homeless. She explained that homelessness in a shelter is difficult. She stated that getting support for housing and vouchers is like a dragon's den situation. She explained she had a voucher offered and taken back. She noted she was then offered housing in Derby. She said she advocates for housing and spoke to elected officials. She said she works with Mothers and Other for Justice. She said she is speaking for myself and sixteen-year-old daughter. She said since she is doing so the tables turned and she has been discharged to leave the building due to a mistake made by the agency that it won't rectify. She explained 211 put me back in system to be interviewed. She explained that HUD, the Department of Housing, and the City of New Haven State do not know that people are being discharged and put out onto the street when they need and qualify for help. She said this begs the question of who is monitoring the providers. She inquired why she was forced to go through cycle of fighting for vouchers or rapid rehousing. She said it's an unending cycle where residents are treated like pieces of crap on bottom of shoes. She pleaded for help and support to help people get support and housing.

Marcus Tart- 53 Judwin Avenue.: testified that they are a recent college graduate and that it's hard for recent graduates to afford apartments so many leave. They testified that despite affordable housing could change lives and keep in New Haven its young people who should be excited about New Haven. They said affordable housing is a great place to start.

Ala Ochumare - 157 Cherry Ann Street: testified that she ended her homelessness because her family could buy property and house her and another family member. She explained that in her professional life she was previously a homeless prevention shelter coordinator at the Salvation Army in Hartford but the position was a victim of state budget cuts so she is now underemployed. She stated that in her work roles she mostly saw people such as Ms. Kidd and Mr. Carmon and that this work is necessary to help people. She recommended 30% be the highest threshold of affordability for low income residents. She said the metric of what is affordable now doesn't make sense because her mother owns a business and property and if she had to rent she could not right now.

Allison Parks, formerly of 66 Norton Street: explained that she was a victim of the 66 Norton condemnation. She said she was thrown in slum hotel for 3 and 1/2 months despite working two jobs. She expressed concern that every year the building was inspected but the building was still condemned. She said the rent would have gone up if issues were fixed and the residents would be able to afford it. She said Mandy Katz and Mandy Management rents are more reasonable if you don't have Section 8. She said that resident can't afford rents with their current income and almost have to make a six figure income to live here.

Wayne Phelps, 42 Emerson Street: testified that h has been here since 1989 and now has a family of six in a 4 room apartment that is too small for his 6'4 son with a sizes 14 shoe and his stepdaughter with sickle cell. He said the people that work there don't seem to want to do their job. He said there needs to be an apartment to suit his family where they can live comfortably. He noted that he felt the apartment's presentation was an illusion as the floors are not level and there are other issues. He stated that the Housing Authority told him he owes \$1700 dollars but couldn't tell him for what and that the staff there needs customer relations training.

Douglas Hausladen, 115 South Water Street. Testified that he was a former property manager who had a realtor's license. He stated that for almost a decade he managed and SRO and got a firelite system for residents. He said as a former Alder of Ward 7 where homeless vets at McQueeney talked about this issue as did resident of Liberty Housing, 90 Park Street, and Howe Street Apartments. He noted he Now lives in ward 6. He said he heard a lot about safety so there might need to be a safety and affordable housing taskforce. He said when he started managing properties he did so with no license. He said it was all on the job training so the taskforce may want to look into that on statewide level. He noted that as a realtor once is licensed but not as property manager. He said he did not recommend using the realtor license process as a model but that there should be some certification at local and state level. He noted that as Transportation, Traffic and Parking director he thought about how parking costs affect rents. He explained that incomes are flat and Rents are too damn high. He noted that this is because capital and operating expenses are high He said parking costs are high and include things like removing snow in middle of winter. He offered that it costs \$300 /month to maintain a spot in a garage structure and over \$100/month in a surface lot. He said there are costs per spot of \$60,000 to construct for underground parking. \$45,000 for above ground structured parking and thousands of dollars per space for surface parking. He recommended removing parking requirements for developments. He said Hartford did it. He said it helps new development get up faster and be less costly to the developer. He said if its needed let the market figure it out. He said if it can't be done citywide than do it within 500 feet of high frequency transit stations like the Bus lines 212 the former D and B buses. He said Seattle unbundled parking from developments so maybe an ordinance that has landlords send the cost of parking. He also supported renovation of existing housing supply including making more space in existing buildings supported through tax incremental financing to change 2 bedrooms to 3 bedrooms. He agreed to send over in memo form.

Alder Kenneth Reveiz, 122 Grafton Street: testified and explained that after having 3-part time jobs even with that paid well they still couldn't afford an apartment so they moved to artist lofts that was affordable but ended up being condemned due to having no water or stove. They noted that healthcare cost also affects this issue especially for the low income.

Alder Greenberg thanked the testifiers and said there will be another meeting in July. He thanked everyone in attendance and the taskforce.

Serena Neal Sanjurjo, stated it was a good meeting.

Karen Dubois Walton- emphasized this is not just New Haven's issue but a regional issue and suggesting getting the focus on this as a regional and statewide issue.

Bonita Grubb stated appreciation and gratitude for the heartfelt and sometimes painful testimonies and applauded those who told their individual stories.

Alder Greenberg conclude with a reminder that there will be meeting in the earlier part of July and again thanked everyone for being present.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:10 PM.