Minutes

New Tenant and Landlord Forums

- Erin and Rob are still working on coordinating a new, smaller scale, more targeted tenant forum scheduled and located to meet the needs of pre-selected tenants whose attendance can be assured. We are currently searching for tenants that would be willing to sit down with us.

- Rob and Dino will coordinate on scheduling a second landlord forum.

Report Recommendations Discussion

- The Task Force continued its discussion of report recommendations in reviewing the first draft of the third report. The Task Force acknowledged that it is difficult to make actionable proposals at this relatively early stage based on the recommendations as they have been formulated at this point.

- Landlord s who don’t accept housing assistance
  - The Task Force discussed the possibility of recommending that the Common Council consider a city ordinance forbidding landlords from accepting tenants that receive rental assistance.
  - The members acknowledged that similar rules are in place in other, similar, upstate New York cities.
  - It was also discussed that this rule would have to be accompanied by an investment in the education of landlords on how rental assistance works.
  - Dino related that different kinds of subsidies have different requirements and processes that can make them more or less attractive to landlords. HUD issued Housing Choice Vouchers (aka Section 8 vouchers) are better because they arrive early in the month and more regularly than other sources, which can come later in the month or have additional reporting requirements or other regulations that need to be complied with by the landlord. Education would be needed to prevent a possible exodus of landlords from the City who would be unwilling to comply with this law.
  - The Task Force discussed that it was difficult to enforce such laws and that they may have the effect of driving up housing costs but that they can provide valuable protections for low-income households that rely on housing assistance and can
make reduce the extreme difficult on such households face in securing quality affordable housing.

- The Task Force determined that an examination of this approach could be recommended to the Common Council with these caveats.

**Tenant Education**

- The Task Force discussed how the City might go about informing tenants of their rights and responsibility, the sources of assistance available to them, and how to mitigate the cost of finding and maintaining affordable housing.

- One issue is that City government does not interact with tenants in their capacity as tenants very often. The only instance the Task Force could identify was in housing court, but this is not a representative cross-section of tenants and certainly not all tenants.

- It was suggested that a pamphlet could be created for tenants and sent out with ROP information and that a regular and ongoing training could be scheduled for tenants. It was noted, however, that the demands of maintaining household on a limited income precluded many households from attending such a training. The trick is to find tenants who are in crisis, while they are working with emergency assistance providers, and making the processes of those emergency assistance providers more educational for tenants so that they don’t end up in a similar situation in the future.

- It was also suggested that the Common Council could consider a mediation requirement in the City Court’s eviction court process that would facilitate dialogue between the tenant and landlord before an eviction warrant could issue. In addition to providing landlords and tenants an opportunity to amicably resolve the eviction proceeding, this could be an opportunity to provide tenants with a resource and rights guide.

**Labor Shortage**

- The Task Force discussed the possibility of recommending that the Summer Youth Employment Program could be used to emphasize technical training in things like plumbing, carpentry, electrical repair and other housing trades. The Task Force was unaware, however, of what regulations came with this program, and whether participants in it could be used for this purpose.

- There was also the reality that many adults in the City would likely participate in this training and would be interested in working these fields if the opportunity were presented to them. The Task Force discussed the partnership between Hudson Valley Community College and Habitat for Humanity wherein HVCC students receive practical technical property maintenance instruction by working of Habitat’s projects.

- One barrier to training that the Task Force noted was the fact that many union training programs appear to be situated outside the City, making it difficult for City residents to attend. Towards this end, it was suggested that the City could
partner with local unions to provide training space within the City so that more city residents could attend training.

- It was noted that local unions seem to be in need of trainees, so a move into the City might be beneficial in that regard.
- With respect to the City’s professional boards, the Task Force was in agreement that offering the test more often and meeting more regularly.
- The Task Force agreed, however, that it should not meddle in the Board’s licensure requirements or generally become too embroiled with the Boards’ operation as they regulate highly technical fields in which the City and the license holders take on substantial liability and which have wide ranging consequences for the City’s housing stock.

- It was mentioned as well that New York City recently created a right to counsel for housing defendants such that every tenant facing eviction there is provided with an attorney. The Task Force briefly discussed this possibility and determined it would be worth investigating in the future.

**Future Meetings**

- It was determined that Rob would send around a poll to see if members still wanted to meet in December in light of the holidays.
- The poll would also include the question of whether meetings should continue at 4 or whether they should be moved out of regular business hours.