

December 16, 2020

General Public Comment Re: Agenda Item 18, demand for a local ordinance to protect tenants.

The undersigned ask the City Council to pass a straightforward, modest measure to stem the tide of evictions without further delay.

Under existing law, landlords can evict tenants under the pretense of “substantial remodeling” without proof that any remodeling will actually be performed, much less that remodeling will be substantial. The proposed ordinance builds on state law by requiring landlords to obtain all necessary permits in advance of issuing an eviction notice, and describe in the eviction notice the nature of the remodel and why it cannot be performed in under 30 days.

Strengthening renter protections to prevent erosion of affordable housing stock and gamesmanship by landlords enjoys broad support in South Pasadena. The South Pasadena Tenants Union, the Housing Rights Center, and the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles all support passage of the ordinance. It has been a month since the Council continued this item to seek stakeholder input. The stakeholders have now had ample opportunity to weigh in.

Yet, rather than taking swift action to adopt the proposed ordinance, city staff have recommended extending the current moratorium on renoevictions for more than 10 months in an apparent capitulation to the landlord lobby.

From the staff memo, it is clear that landlords have been hard at work at City Hall. Their complaints about the ordinance lack merit. Units do not have to be vacant in order to assess whether permitting will be required to remodel them. With notice to tenants, landlords have the right to bring in contractors, architects and engineers to occupied units to evaluate what work needs to be done. Property owners cannot start demolition before obtaining permits—regardless of the scope of work contemplated.

The landlord lobby spuriously complains that landlords cannot shoulder additional relocation costs during the current economic downturn. But the proposed ordinance does not increase relocation assistance. It is a simple procedural requirement that landlords undertake due diligence regarding planned remodeling before evicting a tenant.

The property owners transparently seek to avoid enforcement altogether by advocating for back-end financial penalties in lieu of requiring front-end permits prior to eviction. The vast majority of tenants opt to move out and avoid litigation when served an eviction notice. It is exceedingly unlikely that an unrepresented tenant will obtain discovery about the nature of the remodeling her landlord ultimately undertook in the unit she was forced to vacate. Landlords are advocating for penalties in lieu of prospective permitting because they know, in reality, such penalties will never touch them.

We are looking to our City Council for bold leadership. You know many of us. We are your friends and neighbors. We are asking for your vote on behalf of every neighbor we stand to lose

if the city does not enhance tenant protections. A crushing wave of evictions is anticipated for early 2021. Further delay is not warranted.

Please direct staff to come back with a substantial remodeling ordinance modeled after Long Beach's ordinance, and vote on its passage at the first City Council meeting of 2021.

Sincerely,

1. Sean Abajian
2. Alexander Aquino-Kaljakin
3. Ahilan Arulanantham
4. Anne Bagasao
5. Dr. Paula Bagasao
6. Matthew Barbato
7. Kerrie Barbato
8. David Beadle
9. Chris Becker
10. Jeremy Becker
11. Robin Becker
12. Felicie Borredon
13. Laurent Borredon
14. Tony Butka
15. Anny Celsi
16. Grace Dennis
17. Frederick Eberhardt
18. Alan Ehrlich
19. Justin Ehrlich
20. Stephanie Ehrlich
21. Owen Ellickson
22. Sarah Erlich
23. Richard Fannan
24. Tzung-lin Fu
25. Noel Garcia
26. Rachel Hamilton
27. Michelle Hammond
28. William Hoadley-Brill
29. Laboni Hoq
30. Matthew Hubbard
31. Mariana Huerta Jones
32. Che Hurley
33. Ella Hushagen
34. Fahren James
35. Amy Davis Jones
36. William Kelly
37. Afshin Ketabi
38. Mieke Kramer
39. Helga Kuhn
40. Caitlin Lainoff
41. Emilia Lomeli
42. Sofia Lopez
43. Jan Marshall
44. Richard Marshall
45. Linda McDermott
46. Jenny Muninnopmas
47. Adam Murray
48. Joanne Nuckols
49. Victoria Patterson
50. FJ Pratt
51. Myron Dean Quon
52. Minoli Ratnatunga
53. Zahir Robb
54. Aliza Rood
55. Lisa Rosenberg
56. Shari Sakamoto
57. Andrea Seigel
58. Allie Schreiner
59. Delaine Shane
60. Alexandra Shannon
61. Sean Singleton
62. Alison Smith
63. John Srebalus
64. Levi Srebalus
65. Jim Tavares
66. Katie Telser
67. Andrew Terhune
68. Cassandra Terhune
69. Judith Trout
70. Amy Turk
71. Helen Tran
72. Jean Yu