

MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
CITY OF MONTEREY
Wednesday, February 23, 2022
4:00 PM
ZOOM TELECONFERENCE
MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

Councilmembers

Present: Albert, Haffa, Smith, Williamson, Roberson
Absent: None

City Staff

Present: City Manager, Assistant City Manager, Community Development Director, Parks and Recreation Director, Finance Director, City Clerk, Administrative Analyst (Housing), Assistant City Attorney

This meeting was held with teleconference attendance only, pursuant to the Ralph M. Brown Act, Calif. Government Code section 54953(e)(1)(C) and Resolution No. 22-015 C.S.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Roberson called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. City Clerk Klein explained to the public how to participate in the meeting virtually. She called the roll with Councilmember Albert temporarily absent due to computer issues, and he rejoined the meeting at 4:06 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Roberson led the Pledge.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

1. Receive a Report on Rent Registry Programs (Not a Project under CEQA per Article 20, Section 15378 and General Rule Article 5 Section 15061)
Action: Received report, discussed

Housing Analyst Leonard gave the staff presentation and answered Councilmembers' questions with City Manager Uslar, Assistant City Attorney Salameh, and Community Development Director Cole.

Public comment was received from: Jean Rasch, who stated that housing issues are a natural sector for government involvement; Eloise Shim, who said that a rental registry would not hold landlords accountable or balance power between landlords and tenants; Gabriella Schlesinger-James, who expressed hesitation about a rental registry and said that the Council should already understand their constituents' housing-related needs and issues; Robert Evans, who said that the data is worth collecting and asked how accessory dwelling units (ADUs) would fit into the picture; Tom Rowley, who said that owners would resist registering and that there is no magic solution to housing problems; Esther Malkin, who asserted that a correlation exists between rent issues and homelessness and stated that the rental registry fee was a scare tactic; Scott Dick, who said that property owners take all the risk, and provided thoughts on the City of Salinas' rental registry model and outreach conducted; Barbara Meister, Monterey Bay Aquarium, who spoke about the ripple effect that workers' financial struggles have on the economy; Jeff Davi, who suggested the Council hold meetings about rent control if that is the goal; and Laurie Hambaro, who suggested a regional approach, greater advertising of the

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ECHO Housing advocacy program, and referred to details of the City of Pacific Grove's business licensing requirements for landlords.

The Council discussed the concept of a rental registry. On question, Housing Analyst Leonard and Assistant City Attorney Salameh clarified that the data collected could be distributed in aggregated reports that would not disclose any personally identifiable data. On question, Housing Analyst Leonard stated that accessory dwelling units (ADUs) could be included if desired by the Council.

It was stated by the Council that one apparent goal of some rental registries was related to code compliance, and the question was posed whether the City has enough code compliance. A concern was shared that once a bureaucracy is put into place, it can become expensive and can be complicated to dismantle, and the Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) and Monterey Peninsula Regional Water Authority (MPRWA) were cited as examples. As an alternative to a database, it was proposed to determine what the problem is and then focus on solutions to that problem. It was stated that the proposed program could be considered "mission creep." It was stated that sustainable water is a missing piece of the puzzle that would allow the private sector to add more housing units. It was stated that rent control can make rental problems worse.

It was noted that two-thirds of residents are affected by and involved in the rental market, and that there was justification for the City's involvement from both an economic point of view as well as from the angle of the Council's adopted value driver, "Quality of Life." It was stated that the driving force behind interest in a registry was not code enforcement, but rather the exploding cost of rent. It was stressed that the data that could be collected would be beneficial, but not at the cost cited by staff to run the program. It was suggested to expand the business license collection process to include data collection, and it was suggested that City staff report back to the Council about what would be involved in changing the number of rental units that would require a business license. It was urged that the Council should refocus its intention on rent stabilization and what the City can do to make rents more affordable and encourage employers to provide housing for their essential workers.

It was urged that the Council address issues identified by the renter community in a timely matter for those residents who have been waiting for so long for solutions. In favor of a registry, the question was posed that without adequate data, the Council would have a difficult time pursuing rent stabilization. Stated benefits of a registry included up-to-date contact information for public safety and code compliance purposes and allowing the City to track its rental stock. It was proposed that the City could provide sample leases on its website. It was suggested that if a registry were adopted, it should track all rental units of every size. It was stressed that non-compliant rental businesses not up to date with their business license fees should incur enforcement action.

City Manager Uslar summarized the Council's requests to staff as follows: to look into the City's business license tax and to what degree the City can retool the process to get data, to look at what other cities are doing with respect to business license tax and the ideal number of units that should require paying the tax, and to look at adding a voluntary questionnaire along with the business license process that can produce an annual snapshot of rent-related information. He stated that he heard a consensus from the Council that they were not ready to implement a rental registry. It was confirmed by the Council that the City Manager's summary was accurate, and it was added that the Council would like staff to work on identifying problems and whether

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maintenance and code compliance programs need improvement, including collecting hard data on the number of complaints, to make sure everyone has a safe, livable dwelling.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjourned at 6:17 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved,

DocuSigned by:

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Clementine Bonner Klein
City Clerk

DocuSigned by:

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Clyde Roberson
Mayor