

David Whitaker, Esq.
Director
Irvin Corley, Jr.
Executive Policy Manager
Marcell R. Todd, Jr.
Director, City Planning Commission
Janese Chapman
*Director, Historic Designation
Advisory Board*

John Alexander
Roland Amarteifio
Megha Bamola
LaKisha Barclift, Esq.
Nur Barre
Paige Blessman
M. Rory Bolger, Ph.D., FAICP
Eric Fazzini
Christopher Gulock, AICP


City of Detroit

CITY COUNCIL

LEGISLATIVE POLICY DIVISION
208 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
Detroit, Michigan 48226
Phone: (313) 224-4946 Fax: (313) 224-4336

Derrick Headd
Marcel Hurt, Esq.
Kimani Jeffrey
Edward King
Jamie Murphy
Kim Newby
Analine Powers, Ph.D.
Laurie Anne Sabatini
Rebecca Savage
Ryan Schumaker
Sabrina Shockley
Renee Short
Thomas Stephens, Esq.
Timarie Szwed
Dr. Sheryl Theriot
Theresa Thomas
Ashley A. Wilson

TO: Honorable Detroit City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director 
Legislative Policy Division

DATE: July 5, 2024

RE: **Applying to be appointed to the Detroit Tenants' Rights Commission**

Council Member Mary Waters directed the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) to provide a document outlining a formal process for the general-public to apply to serve on the Detroit Tenants Rights Commission, including a timeline, qualifications that will be considered, and where people submit resumes for consideration.

This report will provide a summary of the process, addressing the above issues.

Overview

On May 7, 2024, the Detroit City Council adopted an ordinance creating the Tenants' Rights Commission to assist in the development of policies that will increase stability, opportunities, safety, and wellness for residential tenants in the city, and ensure inclusion, representation, and equity for tenants in the legislative process.

Membership

The commission shall consist of nine (9) voting members appointed as follows:

Four (4) members shall be appointed by the City Council to a two (2) term, two (2) of which must be individuals who are actively renting residential property in Detroit.

Four (4) members shall be appointed by the mayor to a two (2) year term, two (2) of which must be individuals who are actively renting residential property Detroit.

One member shall be appointed jointly by the City Council and Mayor to a two-year term of office. This member must be a Detroit resident who owns not more than ten registered, habitable, units for occupancy.

LPD recommends City Council adopt the following procedural process for these appointments:

City Council Members may nominate one (1) individual each. City Council shall interview the nominees, exclusive of the non-voting members, in City Council's Internal Operations Standing Committee.

The top five (5) nominees shall be selected by a vote of the City Council Committee of the Whole. The four (4) nominees receiving the most votes shall serve a two (2) two-year term as voting members. The remaining nominee shall be offered to the Mayor as the Mayor-Council joint appointee, also serving a two (2) year term.

Each City Council Member and the Mayor may appoint one non-voting member totaling no more than ten, as appropriate and necessary to represent various perspectives, tenant advocacy organizations, and areas of expertise relevant to the mission of the commission. Each non-voting member shall serve a four (4) year term at the pleasure of the appointing entity.

Qualifications

Individuals appointed to the Commission must fit within the following qualification guidelines:

- Each voting member shall be a resident of the City of Detroit at the time of appointment and throughout the duration of their appointment term.
- The voting membership of the commission should be representative of various renter perspectives in the city including, but not limited to, senior citizens, person with disabilities, students, and young persons.
- Of the four (4) members appointed by the City Council, two must be individuals who are actively renting residential property in the City of Detroit.
- At least one member of the commission, either voting or non-voting, should be a civil mediator with sufficient education and training as is required by the State Court Administrative Office.
- Individuals serving should be familiar with landlord tenant issues and possess the ability to advocate on behalf of other residents throughout the city who have matters before the commission.

All persons seeking appointment are encouraged to submit a cover letter and resume; however, none are required.

The ordinance does not set a particular timeline; however, LPD suggests the following as a possible process which should allow sufficient time to seek well-qualified candidates:

1. Each Council Member provide the name and information for one (1) individual to be considered for nomination to the commission to the Chair of the Internal Operations Committee by July 26, 2024; and
2. Allow Council to schedule and conduct interviews, then vote for the Commission members, by September 17, 2024.

If shorter or longer timelines are desired by Council, they can of course be adjusted. If there is further assistance needed, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

BY COUNCIL MEMBER MARY WATERS

**RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE SELECTION PROCESS FOR
THE DETROIT TENANTS' RIGHTS COMMISSION**

WHEREAS, On May 7, 2024, the Detroit City Council approved an ordinance creating the Tenants' Rights Commission to assist in the development of policies that will increase stability, opportunities, safety, and wellness for residential tenants in the city, and ensure inclusion, representation, and equity for tenants in the legislative process; and

WHEREAS, Detroit housing stock is currently 52% renter occupied, with twenty-five percent of Detroit renters severely rent burdened, paying over 50% of income on housing expenses; and

WHEREAS, As a result of aggressive blight elimination efforts, the value of homes has risen significantly. Consequently, rental rates have dramatically increased while renters who are already low-income, earn a wage that has not kept up with inflation; and

WHEREAS, Unscrupulous landlords have failed to register their properties as rental properties and failed to maintain their properties up to habitable standards, feeding upon the desperation of people who must have a place to live with a roof overhead; and

WHEREAS, Tenants deal with a myriad the issues involving maintenance of the dwellings, monetary disputes, blatant violations of renters' rights, and non-owner-occupied foreclosures, unaware of any available resources; and

WHEREAS, There are an average 30,000 evictions filed in Detroit each year. Many of the tenants are single mothers with children who face eviction for withholding rent because of unlivable conditions; and

WHEREAS, The Commission shall serve as a collective voice of advocacy for tenants of our city, vested with the authority to offer recommendations to the Council and Mayor regarding the following:

- Reducing Detroit evictions rates,
- Establishing and protecting tenants' rights,
- Ensuring that quality and affordable rental units are available,
- Establishing city-wide tenants' associations, and

- Reporting landlords who lack the required certification of compliance; and

WHEREAS, The Detroit City Council recognizes the extraordinary scope of this problem in our city and believes careful examination of the issues and empowerment of our renter population are the only ways to change the course of this crisis that effects such a large part of our community and our city’s future; and

WHEREAS, The Detroit City Council would like for the first meeting of the Tenants’ Rights Commission to take place on later than the first week of October 2024. **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, The Tenants’ Right Commission shall consist of nine (9) voting members appointed as follows:

Four (4) members shall be appointed by the City Council, two (2) of which must be individuals who are actively renting residential property in the city; and

Four (4) members shall be appointed by the mayor, two (2) of which must be individuals who are actively renting residential property in the City; and

One member shall be appointed jointly by the City Council and the Mayor to a two-year term of office and must be a Detroit resident who owns not more than ten registered, habitable, units for occupancy; **BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED, Each City Council Member and the Mayor may respectively appoint one non-voting member, totaling no more than ten, as appropriate or necessary, representing various perspectives, tenant advocacy organizations, and areas of expertise relevant to the mission of the commission; **BE IT FINALLY**

RESOLVED, City Council appointments for the voting members shall occur as follows:

Each City Council Member may nominate one (1) individual for the voting member seats. City Council shall conduct interviews in Council’s Internal Operations Committee of the nominees.

The top five (5) nominees shall be selected by a vote of the City Council Committee of the Whole. Of those, the four (4) nominees receiving the most votes shall be selected to serve as Council’s voting members and the fifth nominee shall be offered to the Mayor as the joint appointee.