

From: [REDACTED]
To: -- City Clerk; Barnacle, Brian; Karen Nau; Pocekay, Dennis; Cader-Thompson, Janice; Healy, Mike; Shribbs, John; McDonnell, Kevin
Subject: Public Comment for April 17, 2023 City Council Agenda Item #10: "Strengthen Just Cause"
Date: Friday, April 14, 2023 1:53:01 PM

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Dear City Council and Staff:

I am a former Petaluma renter. I strongly encourage you to strengthen and make permanent the Just Cause ordinance. If you don't make it tenable to live in this community, you won't *have* a community. This just cause eviction ordinance is a first step in making Petaluma a more equitable community to live in.

This is already a community where workers from other regions have made their homes because they can't afford their own city, which in turn pushes out the workers of this community. I know this to be true because this is how it was even when I was growing up in SF and both my parents' partners in the SFPD lived in Petaluma or nearby. Conversely, the workforce in Petaluma engages in long commutes, from homes they had to take outside the community due to displacement or being priced out.

What happens in an emergency when first responders have to [fly in from](#) their homes 100's of miles from Petaluma, because it makes more economic sense for them to live there than here? What happens when the city clerk can't help you in the EOC because her house is closer to the wildfire based on where she can afford to live versus Petaluma, which is not under threat of a fire, as happened in 2017? This ordinance will help make Petaluma a community that supports its workforce, and not just a City for the wealthy.

I tell my story because it is important for you to know that even I, a former city staff member, an attorney, and a renter, was displaced through a traumatic eviction by a "mom and pop" owner. I was served an eviction notice on a Christmas Eve by a callous and harassing landlord. I had already been evicted from my prior home rental in Petaluma so that the owners could move in, during the housing crisis created by the Tubbs fire in 2017. After the second no-fault eviction notice, I thought to myself, "well, we don't need to be in California anymore." Because that was precisely the kind of thing I didn't need to navigate in the middle of a global pandemic: having to search for housing in an exploding market, where lack of stock has created even more hardship.

I knew my rights. I knew them, I exercised them, I reached out to experts and I knew I was absolutely out of luck due to the lack of protections for my single family home

rental. It seemed impossible but true that I had zero recourse except to move. At any time for any reason, through zero fault of my own, my living situation could be yanked out from under me and there was literally nothing I could do about it. This is the position so many other renters, of which we are myriad, without the money to save for a downpayment and have stability of ownership in an incredibly overpriced housing market.

I want you to imagine if you were at the place I was in my career, established, working hard, seemingly having made something of myself, and that being true for you. How would you feel? To have the safety of your living situation taken away from you? To navigate the time and expense and awfulness of moving because of the predatory, capitalist whims of someone else?

If you choose to further weaken this just cause ordinance, you are not protecting the interests of the people who live in your City, the people who work for you, and the people who have kids to raise and busy lives. The people who can't always be at a Monday night city council meeting to protect their interests and therefore have their voices quashed in favor of those who have the privilege to be in front of you for hours on a Monday night and participate, an overly loud minority, the squeaky wheel getting the grease.

If you choose to further weaken this just cause ordinance, it shows us that you are siding with the landed gentry, those living off the income of others who need to pay exorbitant rents to live, and are only in that position by the good fortune of being able to buy into real estate early. You're siding with capitalism. You're saying there needn't be a cap on profit. And because of that choice, you're taking away other people's stability.

There is nothing worse than having done nothing wrong and been dutiful and good and paid your rent and not complained about the myriad of petty annoyances that come with renting only to have your life thrown into chaos and be told you have to uproot your life, at your expense, in more ways than just financially, because your landlord can make more profit off of someone else. That is the instability you will support by not keeping these hard fought protections in place, protections that are in a lot of ways weaker than those in effect in 30 other CA cities.

Please listen to your renter community members, their advocates, and community stakeholders. They are connected to this struggle. Their voice has been shouted down by those with far more power, money, and privilege; please do not ignore it any longer. Whatever they are asking for in this ordinance, please implement it. If it were in effect when I was a member of the Petaluma community, I might still be there, near my family and the area I grew up, working for a community I deeply cared

about.

Sincerely,

Lisa Tennenbaum