

From: [REDACTED]
To: -- City Clerk
Subject: April 17, 2023 City Council Agenda Item #10: "Strengthen Just Cause"
Date: Friday, April 14, 2023 2:31:49 PM

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Dear City Council and Staff:

My name is Karen Nyhus and I am a former renter, now a Petaluma homeowner, and member of the Sonoma County Green Party County Council.

I rented in various San Francisco neighborhoods for over 30 years, and saw a lot of unjust eviction. I don't want Petaluma to be cruel or unjust to already-vulnerable people.

I want to thank you for your work toward passing Just Cause. I strongly encourage you to strengthen the Just Cause ordinance being presented Monday evening, and remove the sunset date. By doing so, you will provide meaningful protections for Petaluma tenants in a time of economic challenge and uncertainty.

Other subsidies (such as for food and healthcare) are being removed, and low-income families are already struggling. Let's not create more homelessness through city policy when we have a chance to do better and protect resident renters.

There are many great provisions in the Residential Tenancy Protections Ordinance, but a few could use further attention. Specifically, I request that you:

- consider making the relocation fee for no-fault evictions the greater of 250% of the rent or \$11,000, not the lesser. There needs to be a disincentive for no-fault evictions.

- close the "reno-viction" loophole, and make it clear that eviction for substantial renovation will not displace the occupant, and that they will be returned to their home when renovations are complete.

- add provisions under the owner/relative move-in no-fault just cause, to prevent a landlord from abusing this reason to displace a family. For instance, stipulate that no more than one unit can be utilized for an owner/relative move-in at any one property.

Additionally, if the landlord has a vacant unit, please prevent them from displacing a tenant over moving into that vacant unit. Several jurisdictions have model language for this, including but not limited to Berkeley, San Francisco, and Fairfax.

- consider adding back the Ellis Act regulations. Petaluma would be the only jurisdiction with a six-month right to re-rent in the state. The Ellis Act is the most abused just cause for eviction, and taking the teeth out of this in Petaluma will lead to more abuse. At a minimum, please add the longer notice period prescribed by state law, a 120-day notice of termination of tenancy, which becomes a one-year notice if the tenant is a senior or disabled.

- Finally, please add protective language found in several other ordinances, that prevent eviction for subletting where:

- “1) the tenant continues to live in the unit as his or her primary residence;
- 2) the number of tenants and subtenants occupying the unit does not exceed the number of occupants originally allowed by the rental agreement OR under CA Health and Safety Code, whichever is greater, and
- 3) the Landlord has unreasonably withheld the right to sublease following written request by the tenant.

A landlord’s reasonable refusal of the tenant’s request may not be based on the proposed additional occupant’s lack of creditworthiness if that person will not be obligated to pay rent to the landlord. A landlord’s reasonable refusal may be based on, but is not limited to, the ground that the total number of occupants in a rental unit exceeds the maximum number of occupants as determined under the CA Health & Safety Code. Before trying to recover possession based on subletting or limits on the number of occupants in the unit, the landlord must serve the tenant a written notice of violation that provides the tenant with a minimum of 14 days opportunity to address the violation...”]

I appreciate your support of strong tenant protections. Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,
Karen Nyhus

Sent from my Galaxy