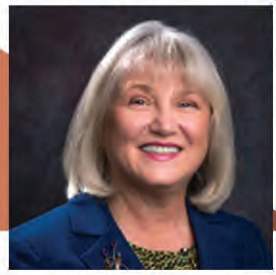
President's Message



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The start of a new year. How exciting. Let's make it the best one yet.

There will be many challenges ahead as we saw at the December 3rd City Council meeting.

Rather than take the recommendations made at the Town Hall meeting on October 14, 2024 by the majority of the some 100 people in attendance either in person or by Zoom, the City Council members were each asked what THEIR individual priorities were. They validated this by stating that they had interacted with all different groups both on the housing providers' side and the tenants' side. Yes, we are now on SIDES. The old familiarity and relationship between housing providers and tenants is gone. With all of these new laws and regulations, there is animosity rather than trust and understanding.

I have heard from so many Mom and Pop landlords that they used to unilaterally reduce rents for tenants who came to them with their individual problems and challenges. Some unilaterally reduced rents during the entire time of COVID. Some waited months to receive rent when a tenant was facing trouble such as health issues or the loss of a job or both.

Such actions are no longer available because if a housing provider reduces rent, then that person may be faced with a rent cap either state wide or locally that is based on the reduced rent and then it will not be possible to catch up to the prior rent.

Also, many housing providers are faced with charges of discrimination if they treat any tenant differently even if it is due to challenges and the housing provider is trying to do a good deed.

So, what were the City Council members' priorities?

There were 10 to choose from. The list and the votes by each City Council member is listed in the attachment "Council Agenda Report Summary of Votes on Priorities" on page 33, along with more details from the meeting.

At the December 3rd, 2024 City Council meeting, Mayor Rowse asked each City Council member for his or her top 3 priorities and list them by their number.

He began with Alejandra Gutierrez who after a thoughtful response stated that her top three were education (#10), incentive programs for housing providers (#8) and increasing affordable housing supply by streamlining ADU permits (#1).

Kristin Sneddon wanted all 10 and finally reduced these to rent stabilization for 4 or more units (#2), dedicated funding (#1) and access to legal counsel (#4).

Mike Jordan wants a workshop instead of an us/them approach. His top priorities were funding, (#1) access to legal counsel (#4) and education (#10). He had serious concerns about who would bear the costs and consequences of other programs. He also stated that someone should call out the state for its demand for loss income housing with zero help. Bonus density is a joke and UCSB and SBCC have significant impact on housing.

Eric Friedman wanted all of the items researched for their financial impact. His top three priorities were funding source (#1), right to counsel (#4) and Tiny Homes (#6).

Oscar Gutierrez voted for rent stabilization (#2), rent registry (#3), and incentive programs (#5).

Megan Harmon selected funding source (#1), rent stabilization program (#2) and rent registry (#3).

Mayor Rowse chose funding source (#1), incentive programs for landlords (#5) and resources (#10). He voted no on 2 and 3 because he felt it polarizes the parties.

There will be another City Council meeting in the Spring. We will keep you informed of the date and time.

Please review these resources in the meantime and e-mail the Mayor and City Council members with your thoughts, ideas and real life experiences.

Happy New Year and please remember to renew your membership every year to continue the good work of this organization.

Sincerely,

Betty L. Jeppesen

President

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