

**MINUTES  
FAIR RENT COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING (HYBRID) OF MARCH 11, 2026**

Present: Commissioner/Chair Rakim Grant; Commissioner/Vice Chair Darrell Fennell; Commissioner Robert Rosenthal; Commissioner Linette Gaunichaux; Commissioner Sal Calvo; Commissioner Robert Kronenberger (remote)

Staff: Atty. Philip G. Kent, as outside counsel for the Commission, along with Paralegal Johanna Rivera (remote)

Public: Landlord's counsel Atty. William Bowles; Landlord's counsel Atty. Ian Gottlieb; Landlord's counsel Atty. Cristina Carabetta (remote); landlord rep., Mr. Fabrizio Monarca/Monarca Properties, LLC; landlord rep. Randy Kran/Bridgemark Property Management, LLC; tenant Myrna Rivera; tenant Rossana Barnaby (remote); tenant Eddie DeLeon and tenant Jamie Lynch

**1. Call to Order:**

Commissioner / Chair Grant called the Meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**2. Public Comment:**

The Chair called for public comment with no response.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Gaunichaux made a MOTION to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2026 Regular Meeting. Commissioner Calvo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously without further discussion.

**4. Correspondence**

None reported.

**5. New Business**

**A. Report in New Complaints / Jurisdictional Review / Pending Matters**

Atty. Kent briefly summarized new complaints of Madison Humphrey v. Carabetta as to excessive rent; Alicea Dunkley and Kevin Malley v. Center Realty as to excessive rent allegedly due to conditions / code issues; Terrence Dowdye v. Stoneycrest Towers as to excessive rent allegedly due to conditions/code issues; Scott Crooks v. Better Provisions as to excessive rent allegedly due to conditions/code issues. Attorney Kent stated that he had been alerted by Mr. Crooks that he had since moved out of the unit and there's no assertion of retaliation.

Commissioner Rosenthal made a MOTION to accept jurisdiction over the Humphrey complaint. Commissioner Gaunichaux seconded the motion, which passed unanimously without further discussion.

Commissioner Gaunichaux made a MOTION to accept jurisdiction over the Dunkley/Malley complaint. Commissioner Calvo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously without further discussion.

Commissioner Gaunichaux made a MOTION to accept jurisdiction over the Dowdye complaint. Commissioner Calvo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously without further discussion.

Commissioner Kronenberger made a MOTION to table the Crooks complaint. Commissioner Fennell asked if Mr. Crooks wanted to dismiss his complaint. Attorney Kent indicated that the matter is subject to jurisdictional review and the Commission would have to determine what to do. Attorney Kent further stated in the absence of a claim of retaliation, he doesn't believe that the Commission has jurisdiction. Commissioner Rosenthal stated that they do not have jurisdiction. Commissioner Fennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously without further discussion.

#### **B. Proposed Amendment to By Laws**

The Commission decided on an amendment in the past with respect to changing the Bylaws to refer to settlement discussions instead of mediations. Atty. Kent made those changes to the Bylaws. Commissioner Gaunichaux made a MOTION to accept those amendments to the Bylaws. Commissioner Kronenberger seconded the motion. Commissioner Fennell amended the MOTION to also correct two typographical errors in the Bylaws at Section 7.5. Commissioner Rosenthal seconded the amended motion, which passed unanimously without further discussion.

#### **C. Discussion of Appeal timeline re Notice of Decision**

The Commission discussed the appeal timeline but tabled the discussion for a later Executive Session.

### **6. Old Business**

*The following is a summary only. Please see the hearing recording for more detailed information.*

#### **1. Hearing / deliberations / decision re Rivera v. Middletown at Main Partners LLC (as to a compliance hearing)**

The Chair called the Rivera matter for hearing. Parties were sworn in.

Ms. Kran testified that landlord has reviewed the issues regarding the building. They are fairly new owners and have brought the building to code. The elevator is up and running and in working order. All the issues with Ms. Rivera's unit have been resolved and corrected. The landlord referenced reports from the Building and Health Departments that all the requirements have been met. Ms. Kran requests that the Commission's order be lifted so that they can have Ms. Rivera paying her previously agreed rent as oppose to \$25.00/month under the order.

Ms. Rivera testified that the new owners have installed new windows in her apartment and a new floor in the living room. She confirmed the eviction matter was withdrawn because the Fair Rent Commission stepped in. Although the new owners have fixed the issues in her apartment, her concern is that her normal rent is more than other tenants at \$1,150.00. Her concern is that once the Commission's order is lifted, the new owners will raise her rent to make up for building renovations. She wants to make sure that her deposit is in order and it's not being used for anything else. She sent her \$25.00/month rent and was charged \$100.00 late fee. Ms. Kran stated that all late fees were removed from Ms. Rivera's account. Ms. Rivera delivered this month's rent check and Ms. Kran stated that they received it and its recorded. Ms. Rivera stated she is still receiving high electricity bills. Ms. Kran stated she requested bills from Ms. Rivera and has not received them but she is not allowed to call Eversource because it's Ms. Rivera's account. Ms. Kran suggested Ms. Rivera contact Eversource. Ms. Kran stated that they ran an energy test and they are waiting for that report so they can make the building more energy efficient. Ms. Rivera stated she emailed copies of the bills, but they did not go through.

Commissioner Fennell state that the decision did not state that the rent will go back to \$1,150.00. Commissioner Grant understood the decision to say that the rent will go back to \$1,150.00 once the repairs were made.

Commissioner Calvo inquired of Ms. Rivera regarding the Eversource bills. Commissioner Gaunichaux inquired of Ms. Rivera and Ms. Kran regarding Ms. Rivera's rent. Ms. Kran stated Ms. Rivera is in an unrenovated unit and her rent will be \$1,150.00. Commissioner Rosenthal asked if there were tenants paying \$800.00 for similar units. Ms. Kran stated that they were existing tenants. Commissioner Grant questioned whether the mold and issues with the heating vent were addressed as they were not mentioned in the health/fire departments reports. Mr. Kran stated they were addressed. They had a company come in and clean the vents and ducts and replace the filters. Repairs to the staircase were made. Hallways are lit and have new carpeting. All the other repairs mentioned in the health/fire departments reports have been addressed.

Commissioner Fennell asked Ms. Rivera if she was happy paying the \$1,150.00. Ms. Rivera stated not if other tenants were paying \$800.00. Commissioner Gaunichaux stated that Ms. Kran clarified why the other tenants were paying \$800.00. Chair Grant discussed potential modifications to an order on a given matter under Section 7.6 of the Bylaws. To that issue, Attorney Kent stated that 5 of the 6 Commissioners present sat on the original decision, along with Commissioner Duffy, such that modifications could be made. Ms. Kran stated that they have rented full renovated units at \$1,900.00 but the reason Ms. Rivera's rent is at \$1,150.00 is because that is the rent that she was supposed to be paying before the Commission determined the building was not up to code. Chair Grant's understanding is that under the decision, once the

repairs had been addressed the Commission would make its determination to move forward whichever way it saw fit because at that time the building was in a state of disrepair.

On deliberations, Chair Grant stated that landlord complied with what the Commission ordered. Commissioner Calvo confirmed with Ms. Rivera whether heat was included. Ms. Kran stated they have a high efficiency heat electric pump at that building. Ms. Rivera stated that other tenants have had issues with high electric bills. Chair Grant inquired whether there is one heat system for the whole building. Ms. Kran stated that there are separate heating units. Ms. Kran stated again that she would call Eversource if she could have a copy of Ms. Rivera's electricity bill. Ms. Kran states that the building has its own electricity meter. Ms. Rivera states that she will give copies of her bills to Ms. Kran. Chair Gaunichaux agreed that the landlord complied with the Commission's orders. She further stated that the electricity issue is a separate component and that Ms. Rivera should follow up with the landlord and could return to the Commission if needed.

Commissioner Kronenberger made a MOTION to find compliance with the Commission's orders. Commissioner Calvo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously without further discussion as follows:

Grant: aye; Gaunichaux: aye; Fennell: aye ; Rosenthal: aye; Calvo: aye; Kronenberger: aye

**2. Hearing / deliberations / decision re Barnaby/Anthony v. Kosel Equity, LLC as to the Motion for Reconsideration hearing**

The Chair called the Barnaby/Anthony v. Kosel Equity matter for hearing. Parties were sworn in. Parties submitted exhibits.

Attorney Gottlieb stated he had not received anything from the City about an inspection on the apartment. Attorney Kent stated that Attorney Gottlieb's office filed the Motion for Reconsideration and asked for a compliance hearing. Attorney Gottlieb stated that they did not ask for a compliance hearing. He further states that the Commission's orders were completed and there has been no response from the City. Attorney Kent stated that he had sent a copy of the Notice of Decision to the Health Inspector and would follow up. The compliance hearing was tabled.

Regarding the Motion for Reconsideration, Attorney Gottlieb is relying on his brief and stated for the record the introduction to his brief.

In evaluating the motion, Chair Grant focused on the fact that the complaint contained the issues being heard such that landlord had notice of those issues in advance of the hearing Chair Grant also noted that the CPI number was not the primary driver of the Commission's decision as he understood it. The Commission has power to enforce the code and determined the rent was unconscionable due to unsanitary conditions.

Commissioner Fennell agreed with Chair Grant and discussed, among other things, the complaint, Kosel's unsigned answer, and taking notice of the CPI Index as a fact finder, which helps the landlord or does not harm the landlord, although here the landlord did not submit evidence that their taxes and overhead had significantly increased. Attorney Gottlieb objected to Commissioner Fennell participating in this meeting. Attorney Gottlieb has move in all the cases to disqualify Commissioner Fennell. Chair Grant summarizes Commissioner Fennell's argument to deny the Motion for Reconsideration.

Attorney Gottlieb disputed the use of the CPI Index and the involvement of Commissioner Fennell, and stated he would recommend for his client to take an appeal.

Commissioner Rosenthal moved for a MOTION to deny the Motion for Reconsideration, Commissioner Gaunichaux seconded the motion, which passed unanimously without further discussion, as follows:

Grant: aye; Gaunichaux: aye; Fennell: aye; Calvo: aye; Rosenthal: aye; Kronenberger: aye

### **3. Hearing / deliberations / decision re DeLeon v. Monarca Properties, LLC complaint**

The Chair called the DeLeon v. Monarca matter for hearing. Parties were sworn in. Parties submitted exhibits.

Mr. DeLeon stated he was told to move out by May 31st so the landlord can renovate. He wanted the landlord to replace the electrical panel. Mr. DeLeon stated he will have surgery soon and that the landlord would not pay for a hotel during the renovations. Mr. DeLeon believes the landlord will seek to evict him and render him homeless. Mr. DeLeon stated he is disabled and does not want to move out.

Mr. Monarca admits he sent a letter to Mr. DeLeon that he will increase the rent back in September 2025, but that after the retaliation decision the rent has remained at \$900.00 and Mr. DeLeon has paid the rent every month. Mr. Monarca has no objection for the rent to remain at \$900.00. Mr. DeLeon is a month to month tenant. Mr. Monarca needs to renovate the apartment because of insurance issues. Mr. Monarca worked with the City's department to repair the issues that Mr. DeLeon stated in his complaint. Mr. DeLeon brought a code enforcement complaint with the Superior Court but that has been withdrawn. The stairs and railings, door frame, flooring and cement stairs were all fixed. The City inspected those items.

Attorney Bowles crossed examined Mr. DeLeon, who agreed that the rent of \$900 is fair. There also is no eviction proceeding pending. Attorney Bowles stated, however, that if Mr. DeLeon doesn't vacate the property, Mr. Monarca would seek to evict Mr. DeLeon. Attorney Bowles stated that Mr. Monarca has complied with the retaliation hearing's order, Mr. Monarca is withdrawing the rent proposal of \$1,400 and is willing to remain at \$900.00. As such, Atty. Bowles argued Mr. Monarca deserves relief from the complaint by way of dismissal and that Mr.

DeLeon should seek outside assistance to help find another place to live. Mr. DeLeon has applied for Section 8.

Upon inquiry from the Commission, both Mr. DeLeon and Mr. Monarca agree that the \$900.00 rent is fair.

Chair Grant made a MOTION to find that the rent of \$900.00 is not excessive or harsh and unconscionable under the circumstances especially under Ordinance 14- 78 A (6). Commissioner Fennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously without further discussion, as follows:

Grant: aye; Gaunichaux: aye; Fennell: aye; Calvo: aye; Rosenthal: aye; Kronenberger: aye

A recess was taken from 8:57 p.m. to 9:02 p.m.

#### **4. Hearing / deliberations / decision re Lynch v. CR Summer Hill Limited Partnership**

The Chair called the Lynch matter for hearing. Parties were sworn in. Parties submitted exhibits.

Ms. Lynch stated she moved in March 2023, that her rent was \$1,200.00, and that her new proposed rent is \$1,490.00. Mr. Lynch has requested maintenance for several things including window screens and living room floors flaking up, which have not been repaired. An inspection was completed in October 2025. Carabetta noticed mildew in the apartment and agreed to clean it. Ms. Lynch was given a dehumidifier. Ms. Lynch's main concern is that her daughter has asthma and she has asthma. Carabetta reached out in January, but was unable to schedule an appointment because Lynch and her daughter were sick. Another tenant in the building wrote a letter stating maintenance issues. Lynch does not believe maintenance is done in a timely matter. She also testified that the heating knob on the baseboard in her daughter's room was installed wrong and painted over. Ms. Lynch stated that landlord has fixed other things. She understands that rents will increase, but argues maintenance should be done in a timely and appropriate manner, and that snow plowing also must be done appropriately.

Attorney Carabetta stated Carabetta is aware of the issues that were raised in Ms. Lynch's complaint and all current issues are being addressed actively. The maintenance team has been trying to coordinate with Ms. Lynch to schedule repairs. Appointments have been rescheduled for different reasons. Ms. Lynch has a demanding work schedule and wants to be present when maintenance is there. Because the maintenance team works until 4:00 p.m. it limits the amount work they can do when Lynch is available. Yet, maintenance has a plan to fix all Ms. Lynch's issues. The bathroom will be addressed first. The windows and the floors will be next. Regarding the rent increase, Atty. Carabetta indicated this was due to the rising costs of operating expenses, capital improvements, market adjustments, inflation and other related costs. Ms. Lynch's rent increase is below market standard in Middletown. Thus, she argues the proposed rent is not excessive and that Carabetta handles all complaints in good faith.

The Commission inquired about informal settlement conferences. Attorney Kent stated that there were two.

Ms. Lynch stated she works from 8 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and would not be comfortable for someone to work at her apartment when she's not there. Attorney Carabetta stated that they respect everyone's wishes with access to their units. All their employees are professional, and go through background checks. Attorney Carabetta hasn't had any issues or reports regarding unprofessional maintenance staff and there is a plan to remediate Ms. Lynch's issues. Attorney Carabetta requested that the parties move forward with the timeline that the parties have agreed to and for the rent increase to remain the same.

Commissioner Rosenthal inquired of Attorney Carabetta about accessing the units for repairs. Commissioner Gaunichaux inquired of Attorney Carabetta if there are emergency services on the weekend, which Attorney Carabetta confirmed. Commissioner Calvo inquired about workers coming into the unit to repair. Ms. Lynch is concerned that workers will go through her things if she is not present.

Chair Grant asked Ms. Lynch if the landlord had made some repairs in general. Ms. Lynch stated that landlord had done some repairs. After she filed her Complaint, the landlord contacted her to fix the issues. There were discussions regarding when the issues will get fixed. Attorney Carabetta stated that the bathroom is the priority and may take a couple of days because of Ms. Lynch's work schedule. Once the warmer weather comes, the screens and floors will be addressed. Commissioner Gaunichaux asked if there is a family member that can be there while the repairs are being done. Ms. Lynch stated that possibly her mom would be able to stay. Commissioner Kronenberger stated that the parties need a game plan as Carabetta is not disputing the repairs.

After further discussion, Commissioner Fennell suggested the matter go back to an informal settlement discussion. Commissioner Calvo stated that the landlord is willing to fix the issues. Chair Grant asked if the parties are open to informal settlement discussions. Ms. Lynch and Attorney Carabetta were open to same. Attorney Kent suggested scheduling an informal settlement discussion the following week after the parties had a chance to discuss further. Thus, the parties will meet for an informal settlement discussion on Friday, March 20th at 3:00 p.m.

Chair Grant made a MOTION to table the matter. Commissioner Fennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously without further discussion, as follows:

Grant: aye; Gaunichaux: aye; Fennell: aye; Calvo: aye; Rosenthal: aye; Kronenberger: aye

## **7. Executive Session**

Not Applicable.

## **8. Adjournment:**

Commissioner Rosenthal made a MOTION to adjourn, and Commissioner Calvo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously without further discussion. The meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.