



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**  
of the Los Altos-Mountain View Area  
97 Hillview Avenue, Los Altos, CA 94022

COPIES TO COUNCIL, CM, CA & ACM, CDP,  
ACAD, N+ASM  
Lauzze

Re: Item 8.1

October 4, 2015

Mayor McAlister and Members of the City Council  
City of Mountain View  
500 Castro Street  
Mountain View, CA 94041

Re: Agenda Item: 8.1- Fair Rental Practices Program

Dear Mayor McAlister and Members of the City Council:

The LWV supports actions that provide affordable housing for all Californians. Based on this position, we support consideration of measures that protect tenants. We support many of the programs put forth in the Fair Rental Practices Program (FRPP), but have serious reservations about the effectiveness of these policies unless they are made mandatory. In addition, we hope that should the Council adopt some of this FRPP, this would be seen as a quick and easy way to try to ameliorate some issues relating to the current housing crisis, but not a program that is really tackling the difficult issues facing the City.

If the Council is looking for quick solutions, we also suggest providing more funds to CSA for rental/emergency assistance. This is a way of quickly helping the crisis at least a little bit. Another quick step would be change the preferences for below-market-rate units and also subsidized units, putting displaced tenants as the top priority.

Regarding the specific FRRP suggestions, we understand that Fremont has had a mandatory mediation program where tenants can dispute rent increases. In the years March 2012- March 2015 the mediation succeeded in reducing the rent increases in only 2% of the cases. The cost-effectiveness of requiring mandatory mediation there clearly was poor. If tenants can require mediation regarding rent increases as well as all notices to leave and the City is notified of the outcomes of all mediations, this might provide helpful data as the City continues to grapple with the issue of rapidly rising rents, but it is not much of a solution to the crisis. Perhaps if the City is given notice of all rent increases by landlords and there is some "penalty" for landlords who either don't comply with this requirement or violate other "fair practices", such a program might be more effective.

We do not know how successful the San Rafael and Healdsburg programs cited by Councilmember Kasperzak have been. The only data included in the staff report from San Rafael showed very early results; at that time, the 37% of the landlords who joined the voluntary program appeared to be those who were willing to comply with the program. Since the Healdsburg program is brand new, we expect there are no conclusive results yet. We would expect that a voluntary mediation program would be even less successful than Fremont's mandatory mediation.

Looking specifically at other practices recommended in the FRPP, we recommend that it be **mandatory to offer** all tenants one-year leases when signing a new lease and at renewal. We believe this is what Palo Alto requires. And there should be specific reasons why tenants can be released from one-year leases, such as losing a job.

We recommend that it be mandatory that landlords give 90-day notices for rent increases and notices to terminate, allowing tenants to leave with 30 days' notice.

We think the City should require landlords to pay a rental registration fee to the City. This fee could be used to fund staff who will keep records of rent increases, to fund additional mediation staff, etc.

Under California law, if a lease is negotiated in Spanish, for example, then the lease is required to be in Spanish. We suggest a notice at the beginning of the lease/rental agreement in the language of the tenant, should the tenant not speak good English, advising the tenant that the lease will be provided in the tenant's language.

We have further suggestions, but generally think that unless many of the suggested practices are made **mandatory** rather than voluntary, very little will be accomplished. We also think that the FRPP could be a part of the discussion on Oct. 19<sup>th</sup> at the Council's Study Session, unless the Council wants to recommend action on some of these practices on Oct. 6th. We would not want to see significant City resources put into proceeding with any of these practices unless we see some of them made mandatory and also know whether these practices have been successful in other cities where they have already been tried.

Donna Yobs  
Co-Chair, Housing Committee  
LWV of the Los Altos-Mountain View Area

Cc: Dan Rich

**Brewer, Lorrie**

**From:** Brewer, Lorrie  
**Sent:** Monday, October 05, 2015 3:49 PM  
**To:** Brewer, Lorrie  
**Subject:** FW: Council Meeting 10/6/15 Agenda Item 8.1

Re: Item 8.1

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**From:** Joan MacDonald [[mailto:joan\\_wally\\_macdonald@calalum.org](mailto:joan_wally_macdonald@calalum.org)]  
**Sent:** Monday, October 05, 2015 12:16 AM  
**To:** Council - Inks; Mike Kasperzak; Chris Clark; McAlister, John; Showalter, Pat; Rosenberg, Ken; Siegel, Lenny; , City Manager  
**Subject:** Council Meeting 10/6/15 Agenda Item 8.1

Joan MacDonald  
Advocates for Affordable Housing  
519 Emmons Drive  
Mountain View, CA 944043  
October 4, 2015

Mayor McAlister and Members of the City Council  
City of Mountain View  
500 Castro Street  
Mountain View, CA 94041  
Re: Agenda Item: 8.1 Fair Rental Practices Program

Dear Mayor McAlister and Members of the City Council:

Advocates for Affordable Housing(AAH), a volunteer group of residents of Mountain View, wishes to give input on the issue of the Fair Rental Practices Program as it might affect the current rental housing crisis facing Mountain View residents.

AAH is supportive of measures that protect tenants in the long term but most especially is concerned about the immediate term. We feel many of the programs put forth in the Fair Rental Practices Program (FRPP) have merit but we are very concerned that as voluntary measures would afford residents little protection. A requirement that year long leases be offered with either no rent increases during that year or CPI + 2-3% increases allowed for the landlords who have not increased rents during the current year would protect tenants and not unduly burden landlords who have been fair to tenants. Similar increases could be allowed for all landlords for subsequent years. Further, clauses for breaking the lease for job loss or family emergencies are needed. The voluntary aspect of the FRPP appears to us to offer no significant

disincentive to those landlords who decline to participate while saying thank you to those who do. That is not enough. Given the tight rental market, even 60 days notice is unrealistic, so if the laws allow it, 90 days or more should be allowed.

Since we have not seen the ordinances from San Rafael or Healdsburg, we can't comment on their specifics. However, absent real teeth, we cannot imagine truly positive results. And, of course, Healdsburg's is so recent data probably isn't available. We have seen comments regarding the Fremont ordinance and they are not encouraging. ABAG has much information that could save staff significant time.

Voluntary mediation as Mountain View has so far has not been productive since landlords have rarely participated and/or tenants have not been aware of this potential.

For mediation to work, both parties must be required to participate. We know that many

tenants are unaware of the potential for remedies if they speak to their landlords, thus

mandatory mediation in their language is a necessity. In fact, many tenants have not had

the opportunity to read their rental agreements in their first language, a fact that should

be remedied.

We support a suggestion brought forth that the City should require landlords to pay a rental registration fee to the City. This fee could be used to fund staff who will keep records of rent increases, to fund additional mediation staff, etc.

We believe Council could deliberate these and other potential remedies on the 19th, keeping in mind that more immediate remedies such as a temporary moratorium on rent increases as

mentioned above and just cause eviction must be put in place to stop the bleeding while the deliberations proceed.

Joan MacDonald  
for Advocates for Affordable Housing

cc: Dan Rich