

City of Jacksonville

Office of the City Council

*117 W. Duval Street
Jacksonville, FL 32202*



Noticed Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 14, 2024

1:00 pm

Don Davis Room

City Hall at St. James
117 W Duval Street Jacksonville FL, 32202

Council Members present

The Hon. Rahman K. Johnson, Ph.D. – District 14;

The Hon. Jimmy Peluso –District 7

Meeting Convened: 1:00 pm **Meeting Adjourned:** 1:47 pm

Members in Attendance:

- **Brittany Norris** - Mayor's Office
- **Mary Staffopoulos** - Office of General Counsel
- **Dame Brooks** - ECA to Councilman Jimmy Peluso (District 7)
- **Andrew Powers** - Executive Council Assistant, Councilman Rahman Johnson, District 14

Purpose

Councilman Johnson convened a noticed meeting to discuss the proposed Landlord Registry Program in Jacksonville. The discussion focused on establishing a comprehensive framework to enhance transparency and accountability within the city's rental housing market. Legal counsel, tenant advocates, landlords, and fellow council members engaged in a collaborative dialogue addressing legislative considerations, challenges in identifying property owners, and gaps in tenant support services. This meeting aimed to explore potential amendments, define the scope of the registry, and consider integration with existing state databases to ensure an effective, cooperative approach to landlord regulation..

Introduction & Opening Comments

Councilman Rahman Johnson (District 14) convened the meeting in response to extensive community feedback from key stakeholders, including the Northeast Florida Association of Realtors, the First Coast Apartments Association, Florida Rising, and a professor from the University of North Florida. Councilmember Peluso introduced the resolution to create space for an in-depth discussion outside of the constraints imposed by the city's budget process, which often limits comprehensive debate on critical offices and positions.

Councilman Johnson underscored the urgent need for a landlord registry, highlighting Jacksonville's high percentage of renters and the growing challenges faced by working-class residents seeking to purchase homes near essential infrastructure. He emphasized that the registry aims to provide renters with transparent access to information about their landlords, including compliance history related to issues such as mold, rodents, and other official complaints.

Peluso reinforced the importance of accountability and maintaining housing standards suitable for the 21st century, noting that the registry will serve as a centralized resource for tenant rights and concerns. Both councilmembers acknowledged Jacksonville's troubling reputation as the "eviction capital of Florida,"

reinforcing the program's role not as a cure-all but as a meaningful step by policymakers to address tenant concerns, encourage long-term residency, and foster sustained investment in the city.

Discussion

The discussion centered on the current resolution proposing a landlord registry, which at present does not explicitly address tenant concerns such as mold, rodents, or other specific complaints. Councilmember Peluso expressed openness to amending the resolution to incorporate more precise language regarding tenant issues and landlords' compliance histories, aiming to enhance the resolution's scope beyond merely cataloging landlords. The registry, as conceived, is intended to provoke public and council debate, increase awareness, and potentially influence the mayor's office on the value of establishing a formal tenant support position or office. However, care was emphasized to ensure that the registry does not devolve into an unregulated platform for unverified landlord reviews but remains a source of official, actionable information.

Councilmember Johnson highlighted that while the city provides some tenant resources—such as the Housing Department within Neighborhoods, social services including veterans support and Parks and Recreation programs, the United Way's 211 service (noted for having exhausted rental assistance funds), and Jacksonville Legal Aid—these efforts are fragmented and lack a centralized, well-publicized point of contact. He underscored the absence of any existing municipal function that combines a landlord registry with tenant advocacy and ombudsman services, leaving many tenants unaware of how to access available assistance. This gap underscores the need for a dedicated office or individual to centralize tenant support.

Regarding registry management, Jimmy Peluso noted the consensus that the registry must be assigned to a specific department rather than remaining unassigned. The conversation underscored the necessity of a dedicated Full-Time Equivalent staff member to manage the registry, though the current resolution lacks clarity on this matter. The ambiguity was described as intentional, designed to allow broader input and debate, especially since some council members might favor third-party funding over a city-funded position, which presents potential conflicts. Examples from other voluntary registries managed by individuals were cited, and the registry's origin was traced back to the Affordable Housing Transition Report. Peluso also suggested exploring an RFP process to involve a community group or outside entity for implementation, noting that if kept in-house, a small dedicated team may be required. As it stands, the resolution addresses only the creation of a landlord list, leaving operational details unaddressed.

On public access and transparency, Councilmember Johnson proposed the potential development of a city webpage linking to the existing state landlord registry, drawing parallels to the Supervisor of Elections' model of linking city resources to state data. This webpage would enhance transparency and tenant access to information. The administration or council staff could manage this webpage, with support from the mayor's office, which has a proven track record in establishing resource pages. Additionally, the conversation acknowledged the complexity of lodging property management: large corporate-managed establishments typically have on-site contacts, whereas smaller properties often lack such infrastructure, making targeted resources especially critical. Input from the University of North Florida was requested to assess the adequacy of data provided by the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) for inclusion in the registry.

Councilmember Johnson further emphasized the legislative amendments needed before the registry is ready for implementation. Proposed revisions include recognizing that multi-unit properties with five or more units are often categorized as public lodging establishments subject to state preemption, and thus might be

excluded from the local registry. The resolution should encourage establishing a landlord registry while excluding properties already covered at the state level. If a registry manager is hired, they would ensure data parity by importing state-level information alongside local data, creating a comprehensive and accessible resource for tenants. Finally, Peluso recommended consulting the general counsel's office about withdrawing the current resolution and drafting a new ordinance with revised language that avoids disproportionately targeting small landlords, signaling a willingness to amend the approach to better address tenant concerns and operational clarity.

Closing Remarks

Councilmember Johnson concluded by emphasizing the necessity of refining the resolution to balance transparency, tenant support, and operational feasibility. He reiterated that while the current proposal lays an important foundation, substantial revisions are needed to transform the landlord registry into a functional, effective tool for tenants and the city alike. Johnson acknowledged the importance of collaboration among council members, city departments, legal advisors, and community stakeholders to craft an ordinance that avoids unintended consequences, such as unfairly penalizing small landlords, while promoting tenant rights and access to resources. He noted Councilmember Peluso's intention to withdraw the current resolution and reintroduce it with revised language that reflects this balanced approach and incorporates more specific tenant protections. Johnson highlighted that intelligent legislation emerges from such partnerships—grounded in mutual respect and a shared commitment to thoughtful, inclusive governance. He expressed eagerness to continue working together, underscoring that this ongoing dialogue is a critical step toward addressing longstanding gaps in tenant support and housing transparency within Jacksonville. Ultimately, this effort holds the promise of establishing a well-coordinated, centralized office or position to advocate for tenants and ensure landlord accountability, setting a precedent for responsive, compassionate policy-making that truly serves the community.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:47 pm by Councilman Johnson.

Minutes: Andrew Powers , ECA District 14

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Posted: 5.21.25 5:00 pm