



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

October 25, 2015

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

Re: Agenda Item 6.2, October 27, 2015 – Urgency Ordinance to Require a Written Residential Rental Lease with a Specified Term

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. Therefore we support the proposed urgency ordinance, which covers many of the issues that we have written you about previously. But we feel that it could easily be strengthened by adding several more details:

- It is important for tenants signing longer-term leases to be able to give 30 days' notice to landlords without penalty, if the city's rental vacancy rate is less than 5%. We hope this can be included in the urgency ordinance.
- California law specifies that landlords should provide leases in the language in which the rental is negotiated. We would like to see a provision that leases are provided in the language that the tenant is most competent in, and that tenants are asked about their preferred language in discussions leading up to a lease.

It is unfortunate that Staff feels that further study is needed before providing ordinance language outlawing higher rents for longer leases as opposed to month-to-month (which is contrary to the usual custom: that longer terms cost less!). Council might wish to clarify why this is seen as complicated.

We are also disappointed that there is no 90-day-notice-to-tenants provision (for rent increases or termination of tenancy) in this urgency ordinance. Despite the theoretical preemption by State law of this extended notice, it is part of at least one local ordinance in our area, some judges have upheld it, and there has been no court ruling against it. We encourage you to make it part of standard procedures in Mountain View until/unless it becomes impossible for judges to support it.

We would like to see a requirement that landlords offer leases within 30 days' of the enactment of this ordinance, and that the leases be completed (or rejected in writing) within 15 days after that.

It is very important that tenants, as well as landlords, be aware of the provisions of any ordinance affecting them, and of their rights and obligations in general. We hope that the City will use whatever means it has to help with this, though we anticipate that less formal networks will also play an important role.

We look forward to seeing additional ordinances promulgated soon that will help lessen the egregious displacement of renters that our city has been experiencing. We appreciate the Council's and Staff's hard work on these issues, including a data collection program and a minimum mandatory mediation under some circumstances (such as an increase over CPI, or slightly over CPI). We also continue to feel that a failure of mandatory mediation should be followed by mandatory arbitration, which would improve the mediation's success rate.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

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

Cc: Dan Rich  
Jannie Quinn  
Randy Tsuda  
Linda Lauzze  
Vera Gil  
Regina Adams