

Winnebagoland Housing Coalition
November 2, 2016
Hooper Community Center Basement
36 Broad St
Oshkosh, WI 54901

Attendance: Kathy Thunes, Kay Hinton, Lori Larson, Angela Thompson, Karen Befus, Lorraine Yarbrough, Neil Romenesko, Kaitlyn Esula, Beth Biesinger, John Wiley and Amy Lang.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and carried to approve the October 2016 minutes.

At the December 7th Housing Coalition meeting, we will discuss Part 3 of Evicted.

Special Presentations: Discussion of Evicted Part 2

Desmond points out that, compared to wealthier areas, residents in poorer neighborhoods are much more likely to help their neighbors. Tenants support one another in times of dire need by helping with bills or buying groceries, but not without judgment or shaming. Desmond writes, "For such vital exchanges to take place, residents had to make their needs known and acknowledge their failures" (p. 181). Neighbors console and prevent a tenant from harming herself when Child Protective Services takes her children away, although one resident still remarks, "It ain't nothing to be proud of... But the Lord took 'em for some reason" (p. 181). Desmond notes that trailer park residents often feel "evictions were deserved, understood to be the outcome of individual failure" (p. 179).

1. How does this revelation compare to Desmond's description of the frequent protests against evictions and unsanitary conditions in the early twentieth century, when "renters opposed landlords and saw themselves as a class with shared interests and a unified purpose" (p. 180)? **People are without hope now. More services are available so they don't need to ban together. Fear to go up against landlords or risk eviction. Due to tvs and phones, families are more isolated and don't know their neighbors.**

2. What changed so drastically in the last hundred or so years, and why? **Technology has changed. More services are available now so people don't need to connect with neighbors for help. More drug problems or is it just hearing about them more?**

Though Sherrera's and Tobin's tenants struggle to pay their rent, the landlords both have an estimated net worth of approximately \$2 million. Sherrera remarks, "The 'hood is good. There's a lot of money there" (p. 152). Similarly, Desmond notes of Tobin, "The annual income of the landlord of perhaps the worst trailer park in the fourth-poorest city in America is 30 times that of his tenants working full-time for minimum wage, and 55 times the annual income of his tenants receiving welfare or SSI. There are two freedoms at odds with each other: the freedom to profit from rents and the freedom to live in a safe and affordable home" (p. 308).

3. Do you see these freedoms being affirmed or denied in Evicted? **Freedom to live in a safe and affordable home is denied. Some Landlords are not fixing things and still making a profit.**

4. Where is the line between running a profitable business and exploitation? **The line between a profitable business and exploitation is Housing should be safe. A business can make a profit only if their product is safe for families. The system is set up for failure. Families are put into rental properties but can't afford to stay there. Utilities are a problem since families can be evicted for**

not paying. After a few months, tenants can not pay rent/utilities, are evicted and leave unit damaged since they don't care/hopeless. Landlords become jaded when they start having to pay for damages to homes so they increase their rent to cover potential costs. People with felonies cannot get safe, affordable housing because good landlords are strict with background checks. They have to take what is available which is substandard. Fair Market Rent of a 2 bedroom is \$704/month. This is an average cost whether an apartment is safe or not. Our struggle: How do we get people who have criminal backgrounds a safe place to live? And How do we keep rent low for people on Disability/ social security/ W2 so that they can afford to pay rent? The community, not the federal government, needs to solve this. How will the new inspection ordinance affect this? The inspection ordinance will increase quality of housing in Oshkosh. We need more tenant training and more case management after people move out of shelter. We discussed getting a partnership with landlords. Landlords could have a grant to cover trashed rental unit and Housing Coalition members could mentor tenants longer. We talked about how tenants could get items fixed in their unit without being evicted and losing their housing. 1) Tenant puts in writing to landlord that items need fixing and give 30 days or less to fix. Time limit is dependent on whether item is a basic need ie heat in winter. 2) if not fixed write to landlord items are not fixed and will withhold a portion of the following month's rent until items are fixed. 3) Pay at least 5% of the rent to landlord. 4) Keep remaining amount of the rent set aside to pay when repair is done. 5) Send letter each month stating not fix. Legal action cannot assist with this unless tenant has an eviction and that is usually too late.

5. On which side of that line do you see Sherrera and Tobin? **They are making a profit but not providing safe housing for their tenants.**

Desmond talks about how eviction impacts the lives of women (p. 98). More specifically, he describes the nuisance property ordinance which allows "police departments to penalize landlords for the behavior of their tenants." In Milwaukee, if 911 is called three or more times in 30 days the property is designated a nuisance (p. 190). The third most common nuisance activity is domestic violence and regardless of the reason for the call, landlords are encouraged to evict the tenant of a property designated a nuisance.

8. What issue is the nuisance law trying to address and what is the impact of the law? **No time to answer.**

9. Who benefits from the nuisance law? **Not the Tenant.**

10. Does the nuisance law perpetuate the cycle of violence? **Yes. Victims must make a choice to stay with perpetrator or kick perpetrator out to keep housing. Many times victims will experience more violence if they tell on perpetrator. Burden is on the victim to provide proof of DV to get the perpetrator off the lease so victim can stay in home. Many times the victim feels at fault and will not tell so eviction happens and violence continues. She is a victim of DV and must find a new place to live with an eviction now on her record.**

11. How else are women impacted by eviction? **Most families are single woman with children. Impact children and their schooling.**

Reports:

Shelter count numbers- For the Last Wednesday in October:

Father Carr's: 56 total people= 19 single men, 17 women, 20 children.

Advocap Transitional: 9 people total (2 Families).

Day by Day: at capacity of 25 people on 11/1/2016.

Christine Ann Center: no report

Case Managers Network- Next meeting is 11/9 at Salvation Army at 9am. Teri Horner, FISC, will be presenting.

Balance of State Update- The next BOS meeting is November 10th and 11th at the Kalahari Resort in Wis Dells. The first day will be an all day workshop on Motivational Interviewing. BOS is looking for more board members with knowledge in Domestic Violence and Substance abuse. Amy will email information to members if anyone is interested in becoming a board member. Applications are due this Friday.

Agency Announcements:

Housing Authority- The November Family Self Sufficiency newsletter was handed out.

Legal Action- Legal Action has hired a new lawyer who will focus on elder abuse.

ECWRP- ECWRP is working on an Oshkosh Comprehensive Plan which is on the City of Oshkosh Website. Neenah comprehensive plan is on the City of Neenah website. Please provide comments to Tom Baron at tbaron@ecwrpc.org for the city of Oshkosh's plan and comments to Kathy Thunes at kthunes@ecwrpc.org for the city of Neenah's plan.

ADVOCAP (PASS) – No updates.

ADRC: ADRC open house is November 4th (Friday) from 8:30am-4pm at Winnebago County Human Services (220 Washington Ave, Oshkosh - Lower Level).

Adjourn: A motion made and carried to adjourn.

Next Meeting: Wednesday December 7, 2016 at 9 am at Hooper Community Center Basement.

Please contact Amy Lang at amyl@advocap.org if you are unable to attend. Please also submit future agenda items or ideas to Amy.

Mission – The Winnebagoland Housing Coalition will maximize resources to identify and address affordable housing needs in our community.

Kay Hinton

Winnebagoland Housing Coalition Secretary