



**TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD FAIR RENT COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
May 5, 2025 at 6:30 pm
West Hartford Town Hall Room 400**

I. Meeting Opening

- A. Call to Order: Chair Nastajha Ortiz calls the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.
- B. Roll Call: Chair Nastajha Ortiz conducts roll call.
Present: Commissioners Kate Martin, Nastajha Ortiz, John Souza, and Bruce Wittchen.
Absent: Commissioners Nichole Berklas, Venica Blythe, and Alexis Safo-Agyeman.
A quorum of members present.
- C. Approval of Minutes from April 3, 2024 Meeting
Motion to approve minutes is made by Commissioner Wittchen.
Motion is seconded by: Commissioner Souza
Vote: Motion passes unanimously

II. New Business

- A. Discussion of Procedure for Meeting
Chair Ortiz discusses the procedure for this evening's meeting.
- B. Continuation of Case # 2025-01, Russell v. Thomas
At 6:33 pm, Chair Ortiz calls for the parties in the matter of *Russell v. Thomas*.
Complainant is present and sworn in. Complainant makes his statement and request to the Commission. The Commissioners deliberate.
Commissioner Souza makes a motion to reduce rent. Commissioners discuss.
Commissioner Wittchen makes a motion that Complainant's rent is harsh and unconscionable as to be egregious. Seconded by Chair Ortiz. At 6:47pm, the record is opened to allow the Complainant to clarify his statement.
Commissioner Souza makes a motion to reduce the Complainant's rent for the month of May. Commissioner Wittchen adds that retaliation is prohibited, up to and including withholding the Complainant's security deposit if the property is found to be in good condition. Seconded by Commissioner Martin. Majority vote.

C. Continuation Case #2025-02, Valentine v. Highland Creativity, LLC, et al.

At 6:52pm, Chair Ortiz calls for the parties in the matter of *Valentine v. Highland Creativity, LLC, et al.* Complainant is present and Respondent is available via phone. Complainant provides her update. Respondent's representative provides their update. Commissioners inquire of the parties. Chair Ortiz makes a motion to release the check by the Town held in escrow to the Respondent and that the remaining order of the Commission with respect to the rent reduction stand. Seconded by Chair Wittchen.

D. Adjournment - Meeting adjourns at 7:21 pm.