



2018 City Council Candidate Questions

HOUSING

What stronger renter protections, including restrictions on evictions without “just cause” and limits on annual rental rate increases, do you support, if any?

PAT BOONE

I want stronger renter protections, including restrictions on evictions without “just cause” and limits on annual rental rate increases, do you support, if any?

ALISON CORMACK

As always, I want to understand what is the problem we are trying to solve, so I would want more information before deciding to implement any of these suggestions. Some of the data that would be useful: how many evictions have there been in Palo Alto in the past five to ten years, what is the range of rents currently paid and what is the median for a few sizes of units/homes, what is the turnover rate in our rental market during a year, how much of our rental stock is single family homes, how many rental units are in what sizes of buildings (e.g., duplexes, 3-9, 10-20, etc.), do we have income ranges for tenants, etc. In general, my belief is that with the strong demand for apartments in Palo Alto, local government should focus on adding supply, which these proposals do not accomplish.

TOM DUBOIS

1. We need to do analysis of the impacts of any proposed ordinances.
2. We should have an open and forthright discussion of ALL options.
3. Most stronger renter protections should only apply to large complexes – I do not support impacting small mom and pop rentals, with just a few units being rented.

I support stronger limits on evictions – I am open to what conditions would be considered just cause, such as an owner or the owner’s family wanting to occupy the space. There could be a lengthy list of allowable “just cause” evictions – it requires careful study of similar ordinances around the state.

I would also support restrictions of only the most extreme rent increases, like a \$500 a month increase on a \$3000 a month apartment. That kind of increase is extremely hard to plan for and forces people out of our community. Analysis is necessary, but I think we should be looking at the only the most extreme increases, possibly 10% or more in a single year.

ERIC FILSETH

Renter protections, including rent controls, target the right problem, but are notoriously susceptible to unintended consequences. Still, we should at least have sent the issue to Policy and Services for further discussion. Inaction also carries risks.

Just-cause eviction (JCE) controls are needed in rent-controlled environments, in order to prevent property owners from evicting tenants specifically in order to raise rates; without rent controls, landlords can simply raise rates anyway. So JCE's are properly part of a rent-control discussion.

CORY WOLBACH

To be clear, "limits on annual rental rate increases" is the definition of "rent stabilization," which, at least in California, is used synonymously with "rent control." (In other states, rent control may refer to a policy of capping total rent, rather than just capping the annual increase in rent, but this is not permitted under CA law, and so is not part of policy debates in CA cities.) I have not supported pushing for traditional rent stabilization (a.k.a. rent control) in Palo Alto because of its limited applicability (only applying to buildings older than 1995) and because I don't think it would survive the inevitable ballot measure challenge. What would have broader reach and find enough community support to survive an initiative challenge?

First, I have worked with renter-advocates to explore and introduce a strong renter protection policy focused on relocation assistance. Essentially, it would use the triggers traditionally associated with rent stabilization and just cause, but with a different remedy. This policy would require relocation assistance either when a tenant is evicted without just cause, or when they must move due to substantial rental increases, or when their building's use changes. We included this proposed policy in the colleagues memo I co-authored this summer.

Second, along with relocation assistance, I also support strengthening our one-year lease requirements, requiring further advanced notice about rental increases, and strengthening the effectiveness of our mediation program.

I am open to any additional ideas to support the challenges faced by renters in Palo Alto.