

LOCAL NEWS

Marin supervisors approve 4th extension of eviction ban

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A countywide moratorium on residential evictions to protect tenants who can't pay rent because of the coronavirus pandemic has been extended to July 31.

Marin County supervisors voted unanimously on Tuesday to take the action. It was the fourth extension of the moratorium, which began on March 24 and was due to expire on June 30.

Supervisors also signaled that the moratorium might not be lifted on Aug. 1.

"I think we're probably going to have to continue this beyond the July period," said Supervisor Dennis Rodoni, "and look at other possible repayment measures."

Supervisor Katie Rice said that people of color in Marin are being disproportionately affected by the disruption to the economy caused by the coronavirus.

"We can't save and help everyone," Rice said, "but we have to be as creative as possible trying to support these folks who tend to be the backbone of our community."

Supervisor Kate Sears suggested that the county look into acting as a broker between landlords in San Rafael's predominantly Latino Canal neighborhood and renters there who are strapped for cash.

"We're not at the end of this challenge," Sears said.



To date, Marin County and the Marin Community Foundation have allotted \$2.68 million for rental assistance to residents who have lost income because of the pandemic.

Leelee Thomas, a Marin County planning manager, told supervisors on Tuesday that when that fund was exhausted recently, 2,000 people seeking assistance remained on the waiting list.

The extra \$600 per week in unemployment benefits authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act is scheduled to expire on July 31.

Judith Bloomberg, a member of the Marin Organizing Committee, commended the supervisors for extending the moratorium but called on them to do more.

“Even as businesses in Marin begin to reopen,” Bloomberg said, “we know that many people are still unemployed or working reduced hours, and as the wait list to receive rental assistance is closed, many of our community members are at greater risk of eviction and displacement than before.”

“There is more to be done,” Bloomberg said, “to prevent a tidal wave of evictions 90 days after the moratorium ends.”

The supervisors previously mandated that renters will be granted 90 days after the moratorium ends to pay back rent.

“Nothing in this resolution removes a tenant’s responsibility to pay their rent,” Thomas said. “It just gives them extra time.”

Bloomberg urged the supervisors to support Assemblyman David Chiu’s bill, AB 1436, which would prohibit landlords from evicting tenants for failing to pay rent during the state of emergency that Gov. Gavin Newsom declared for the pandemic. The bill would also give tenants 15 months to start paying back rent accrued during the pandemic.

Another pending bill that would provide relief to renters, Assemblyman Phil Ting’s AB 828, would put a stay on evictions until the governor ends the state of emergency, and allow tenants to pay unpaid rent in monthly installments.

Joby Tapia, secretary of the Marin Rental Property Association, said, “If the tenants can’t pay rent, we get it, but we’ve all got to work together, not just force one group to absorb the hit. There has to be some consideration for the landlords who are not the sovereign wealth funds or corporate entities that can absorb these kinds of economic losses for the duration.”

Bloomberg also asked the supervisors to provide funding for Legal Aid of Marin.



Lucie Hollingsworth, an attorney for the legal nonprofit, said her office's workload has quadrupled since people began losing their jobs because of the pandemic.

"As we've said before, this moratorium is not self-enforcing," Hollingsworth said. "We ask that the board keep the current moratorium on evictions in place until the state Legislature enacts more permanent protections."

Even if the moratorium is lifted at the end of July, eviction proceedings will not resume until the Judicial Council of California reverses the suspension it ordered on April 6. The order put the suspension in place until 90 days after Newsom declares the state of emergency over.

Newsom issued an executive order on March 16 authorizing local governments to place a moratorium on evictions for renters and homeowners through May 31. Since then, Newsom has extended that order to July 28.

Nevertheless, Marin County Counsel Brian Washington said the county has drawn its authority for including municipalities in its moratorium from its emergency authority to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus.

"If the COVID crisis abates very significantly in the future," Washington wrote in an email, "the county would no longer act on a countywide basis."

Rodoni said Tuesday that if the county loses its authority to enforce a countywide moratorium, it should attempt to coordinate an extension with San Rafael and Novato.

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