

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, NEWS

# CITY RENTERS AND LANDLORDS TEAMED UP TO FIGHT PLANS TO MOVE HOUSING COURT OUT OF LYNN

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BY THOMAS GRILLO | December 5, 2017

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*Rosa Bentley, left, and Kathy Paul, both of Lynn, from the Massachusetts Senior Action Council hold signs protesting the potential moving of Lynn Housing Court to Salem during a hearing on Tuesday. (Spenser Hasak)*

LYNN — Chief Justice Timothy F. Sullivan got an earful Tuesday when three dozen housing advocates, lawyers, tenants and landlords packed Courtroom 1 to stop the closure of Lynn Housing Court.

“We are one of the biggest cities around, but we are always getting the shaft,” said Kathy Paul of the Massachusetts Senior Action Council. “First, Union Hospital closed and now you’re trying to close the housing court. That has to stop.”

Paul was one of a handful of residents who accepted Sullivan’s invitation to discuss the proposed move of the Lynn Housing Court to Salem.

Sullivan and acting clerk magistrate Jeffrey Hernandez explained the number of cases in the city’s housing session has swelled by more than 40 percent since 2014. As a result, he said corridors, conference and courtrooms are jammed, making a stressful situation, where people are dealing with possible eviction, even worse.

As a result, Sullivan has proposed moving the Lynn session to Salem Housing Court.

“Not to address this would be irresponsible,” he said. “But it would also be irresponsible not to discuss the change in location with the public and nonprofits.”

Judge Fairlie Dalton of the Lynn Housing Court said mediation is typically done in the corridor and that’s become increasingly difficult as the number of litigants rise.

“Mediation requires private space because the issue is often about someone losing their home,” she said. “The confined space is a safety concern because the discussion often gets heated.”

Romilio Castaneda, a Lynn landlord, said while he agreed the space issues are real, he suggested forming a committee to explore leasing other real estate in Lynn for the court.

“Why should people have to travel to Salem, when I’m sure there’s space available right here,” he said.

Gale Bowers, a member of Lynn United for Change, asked Sullivan about Salem’s traffic congestion and whether parking was available near the courthouse.

Sullivan said traffic is a bit easier in the morning, when housing court would be scheduled and plenty of parking is available at the MBTA garage across the street from the court.

Still, Carly McClain, a Lynn attorney, said many issues are resolved between landlords and tenants because they can simply walk over to court.

“There is definitely a fear of going over the bridge,” she said. “It will not be as easy to resolve issues if the court is moved to Salem.”

Jackie Berman, another Lynn lawyer, said moving what would be just a few miles away will create an enormous hardship for elders and the handicapped.

State Rep. Daniel Cahill (D-Lynn), who along with the rest of the city's Beacon Hill delegation opposes the move, praised Sullivan for coming to the city and listening to concerns.

"It means a lot to all of us that you are here," he told the judge. "We need to find a solution in Lynn."

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Thomas Grillo



Thomas Grillo is an award-winning business reporter who has worked at Boston's major newspapers covering real estate trends such as the emergence of Assembly Square in Somerville and chronicling the growth of Boston's Seaport District. In Lynn, Thomas covers City Hall and commercial real estate development including the transformation of Lynn's waterfront into a mixed-use neighborhood. Follow him on Twitter [@BosBizThomas](https://twitter.com/BosBizThomas).

Thomas Grillo can be reached at [tgrillo@itemlive.com](mailto:tgrillo@itemlive.com)

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