

**MINUTES OF THE
RENTERS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
AUGUST 12, 2020**

YUKA KUROKAWA CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 5:05 P.M.

Committee Members Present: Alieda Blandford, Riga Godron (Co-Chair), Vanessa Hammond, Ashley McKay, Yuka Kurokawa (Co-Chair), Leslie Robinson

Apologies: Amy White

Absent Without Notice: Alfred Okot Ochen, Jeff Dean

Staff Present: Hollie McKeil – Housing Planner
Lindsay Milburn – Senior Planner, Housing Policy
Ayla Conklin – Secretary
Katie Lauriston – Administrative Assistant

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Alieda Blandford, that the August 12, 2020 Agenda be approved with the following addition:

- Discussion of unexcused Committee member absences.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. ADOPTION OF THE MEETING MINUTES

February 11, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Alieda Blandford, that the February 11, 2020 Meeting Minutes be approved as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Staff provided the Committee with the following updates:

- The amended Terms of Reference that were adopted in February 2020 describe that Committee members may be removed from the Committee after two consecutive unexcused absences, subject to a majority vote. The Committee may make a motion to recommend City Council not replace vacancies on the Renters' Advisory Committee between terms.

- Members with two consecutive unexcused absences (for the meetings scheduled July 28th and August 12th) are:
 - Alfred Okot Ochen
 - Jeff Dean
- Staff clarified the difference between excused and unexcused absences. Staff advised that an absence is considered excused if communication is provided in advance regarding the absence. Absences are deemed unexcused when staff receive no communication regarding the absence.

The Committee discussed:

- The need to achieve quorum and ability for the Committee to be productive.
- Empathizing with those who may not be able to participate at this time.
- Everyone has made adequate efforts to include those who are not responsive.
- The need to provide a decision while reminding members that observers are always welcome.

Leslie Robinson joined the meeting at 5:24pm.

Motion:

It was moved by Vanessa Hammond, seconded by Alieda Blandford, that in keeping with the amended Terms of Reference of the Renters Advisory Committee, those members who have missed two consecutive meetings without notice – Alfred Okot Ochen and Jeff Dean – be removed from the Committee but be reminded that they are also welcome to attend as members of the public.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. TENANT ASSISTANCE POLICY UPDATE

Staff provided an update on the *Tenant Assistance Policy* regarding moving expenses and assistance.

The Committee discussed:

- The proposed policy updates make it explicitly clear that tenants can request additional moving expenses beyond policy rates, by requesting additional assistance.
- What do tenants have to do to request additional compensation and in what instances?
 - The Tenant Assistance Policy includes a provision that gives tenants an opportunity to request additional supports that they may need, above and beyond what is already outlined in the policy. Tenants are provided with a Request for Tenant Assistance Form which they use to indicate their requests for additional assistance. Staff receive and review this form to ensure that the Tenant Assistance Plan submitted by the applicant, addresses all requests made by tenants.
- Inflation costs change over time. Is it possible to build this consideration directly into the policy, or does the policy need to be amended over time?

- Staff will take this into consideration and revise the staff report with the Committee's recommendation.
- Who decides whether additional assistance is required?
 - In order to meet the *Tenant Assistance Policy*, applicants are expected to meet all policy components, and this includes meeting tenant's requests for additional assistance.
 - Staff review these requests and all additional correspondence from tenants. If needed, staff can recommend actions be taken by the applicant to address tenant needs.
 - Once the Tenant Assistance Plan is submitted to the City, it is attached to the development application, excluding all confidential tenant information. Staff advise whether the application meets the *Tenant Assistance Policy*, which Council considers as part of the rezoning application.
- If staff report that the applicant has not met the *Tenant Assistance Policy*, does Council have the authority to decline an application?
 - Potentially, this is one of many considerations in a rezoning application.
- If a tenant is moving outside Victoria, would the average amount to move within Greater Victoria be considered?
 - This is reviewed on a case by case basis.
- The policy needs to be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure that the rates keep up with inflation.

Motion

It was moved by Alieda Blandford, seconded by Ashley McKay, that the compensation amounts in the *Tenant Assistance Policy* be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure that they are adjusted for inflation and reflective of the market rates for moving costs.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. RENTAL PROPERTY STANDARDS OF MAINTENANCE BYLAW UPDATE

Lindsay Milburn, Senior Housing Policy Planner, provided an update on the *Rental Property Standards of Maintenance Bylaw (RPSOM bylaw)*.

- As part of the City's COVID-19 recovery, Council reprioritized several Housing Strategy actions to focus on improving housing security in June 2020. These priorities include:
 - Advance and support the rapid supply of affordable and supportive housing in neighbourhoods throughout the City, with government partners and non-profit housing providers.
 - Bring forward an expanded *Rental Property Standards of Maintenance Bylaw* for consideration.
 - Develop a *Rental Property Licensing Bylaw* to prevent renovictions and demovictions.
 - A new action was added to the Strategy: Explore the creation of a non-profit administered rent bank on a pilot basis.
- The *Rental Property Standards of Maintenance Bylaw* has been expanded from 7 to 22 provisions, following a Court decision in another BC municipality on a related

bylaw, with input from RAC, the RAC sub-committee and other stakeholders. The expanded bylaw will be brought forward for consideration as soon as possible.

The Committee discussed:

- Desire for an opportunity to view and comment on the specific content of the *Rental Property Standards of Maintenance Bylaw* and the desire to see topics of mould in apartments and repairs after water damage addressed in this bylaw.
 - The draft bylaw content has been expanded, and the topics of mould and water damage are now addressed in the bylaw.
 - The bylaw is still under development, but there will be an opportunity to review the bylaw during the business licencing notification period.
- Scope and timeline for upcoming public engagement on the *RPSOM Bylaw*.
 - The Tenant Ambassador position has been postponed and will be considered with the 2021 budget.
 - This has resulted in a reduced scope of engagement. Staff do not have capacity to launch extensive engagement while also managing operational programs.
 - The City's Renter Engagement Toolkit could be helpful in collecting further feedback on this bylaw. Engagement strategies have been restructured during the pandemic, with much engagement being done online; and staff would appreciate the Committee's feedback on these changes and how to best engage renters. This can be added to the next Committee meeting agenda for discussion.

Motion:

It was moved by Ashley McKay, seconded by Yuka Kurokawa, that, given the budget situation during the pandemic, that the Renters Advisory Committee strongly encourages Council to create and hire the Tenant Ambassador position as a top priority in the 2020/2021 budget cycle to advocate on behalf of renters in the City.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

6. SECURED RENTAL HOUSING PROJECT - EARLY CONSULTATION

Hollie McKeil, Housing Planner, provided an overview on the Secured Rental Housing Project.

Launching this September, this project will undertake several actions in housing strategy and council strategic plan. This project will encourage the creation of new affordable and market rental housing, as well as the retention of existing purpose-built rental apartments.

Key deliverables:

- Secured Rental Housing Policy, to encourage market and affordable rental apartments.
- Updating the City's rental replacement policy, to encourage an increase in net new rental units onsite and to limit tenant displacement where feasible, when buildings redevelop.

- Consider how and when to apply residential tenure zoning, including consultation on the city's proposal to apply to all existing rental apartments, as well as with consideration for use with incentives.

The goal of this project is to improve conditions for renters, and tenant will be centered in all engagement. RAC's input will include a dedicated workshop this fall. Early engagement is taking place this summer and fall, including conversations and workshops with a diversity of stakeholders.

The Committee discussed:

- RAC requested that further information on the Secured Rental Housing project be provided:
 - Staff will provide this information in advance of the RAC workshop this fall.
 - There will be several opportunities for engagement throughout the project.

7. RENTAL PROPERTY LICENSING BYLAW - EARLY CONSULTATION

Lindsay Milburn, Senior Housing Policy Planner, provided a brief presentation on the *Rental Property Licensing Bylaw* to receive early input on this bylaw's development.

The Committee discussed:

- Overall support for the Rental Property Licensing bylaw.
- Request for documentation to be emailed to Committee members before each meeting to facilitate discussion.
- Excitement about this topic and how quickly the project is moving forward.
- Interest in accountability and enforcement of this bylaw.

Lindsay Milburn inquired whether there is interest in forming a sub-committee for the *Rental Property Licensing Bylaw*.

- Yuka Kurokawa and Leslie Robinson expressed interest in joining a sub-committee.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Leslie Hammond that the Renters' Advisory Committee meeting of August 12, 2020 be adjourned at 6:44pm.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY