

**MINUTES OF THE
RENTERS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 21, 2020**

RIGA GODRON CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 5:00 P.M.

Committee Members Present: Alieda Blandford (by phone), Jeff Dean, Riga Godron (Co-Chair), Vanessa Hammond, Yuka Kurokawa (Co-Chair), Ashley McKay, Amy White

Apologies: Megan Billings, Leslie Robinson

Absent: Alfred Okot Ochen

Councillors Present: Councillor Jeremy Loveday

Staff Present: Hollie McKeil – Housing Planner
Bridget Frewer – Engagement Advisor
Chloe Tunis – Planner
Katie Lauriston – Administrative Assistant

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Ashley McKay, that the January 21, 2020 Agenda be approved with the following amendment:

- Leslie's item will be rescheduled to the February 11, 2020 meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. ADOPTION OF THE MEETING MINUTES

November 27, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Amy White, that the November 27, 2019 Minutes be approved.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hollie McKeil provided the Committee with the following update:

- Maureen Bourke has resigned from the Renters' Advisory Committee.

Co-Chairs presented the following announcements:

- The Co-Chairs will be facilitating roundtable discussions in Committee meetings to enhance the level of conversation and to give equal chance for members to participate.

- Any members with items they would like discussed at meetings are to contact staff, who will ensure these items are added to the upcoming agenda.

4. ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT FOLLOW-UP

Bridget Frewer, Engagement Advisor, provided the Committee with notes from the November 27, 2019 workshop.

The Committee discussed:

- Are renters living on First Nations reserves counted as renters?
 - Yes. Anyone who rents their home is considered a renter.
- Has the City considered doing a postal drop in rental buildings?
 - Mail drops are done for some projects, depending on the scope and allocated budget for the project.
- Have staff considered providing additional information at seniors activity centres?
 - Staff are updating the engagement framework to support inclusion and to form better connections with groups that are less well represented.
 - The City's Seniors Task Force has drafted an action plan for better support for seniors, including better communication and information for seniors.
- Is there a way to sign up for renter-specific information in the City?
 - The City's e-Newsletter and Council highlights are available for anyone to sign up and receive. These larger newsletters are designed to reach everyone on a broad range of issues.
 - *Engage.victoria.ca* offers a sign-up option for Housing Strategy work currently underway – and a lot of upcoming work this year will be focused on renters and rental housing.
 - Staff would want to make sure we had sufficient content before creating another unique subscription service.

The Committee provided the following feedback:

- recommendation to include all local First Nations in engagement activities
- appreciation for the City's recently improved mobile website
- opportunity to provide a better way to find digital materials uploaded to the City's website (e.g. attachments to Council or Committee agenda items)
- the need to focus explicitly on accessibility
- the need for larger font size when creating materials for seniors
- renters could put their name and email on a list for the City to provide renter-specific information
- the newly-created tenant ambassador position could spearhead a factsheet for renters
- the City should keep a record of all renters.

5. HOUSE CONVERSION REGULATIONS UPDATE – CHECK-IN

Chloe Tunis, Development Services Planner, presented an overview of the proposed updates to the House Conversion Regulations.

The Committee discussed:

- How do the proposed changes interact with the Fairfield neighbourhood plan?
 - Typically only a building permit would be required for a house conversion; this is not changing with the proposed updates to the House Conversion Regulations.
 - House conversions are a component of missing middle housing, by creating spaces within existing houses.
- The need to preserve a neighbourhood's form and character is restrictive, and prevents more supply to be developed.
 - Conversion regulations would provide a way of preserving neighbourhood character while adding more housing supply within existing houses.
- How often would house conversions displace tenants, and would they be eligible for compensation?
 - It is challenging to predict the uptake of the new regulations, and unknown how many of those converted houses are rented.
 - No Tenant Assistance Policy is required through the building permit process; this is only required through rezoning applications.
- To how many houses would the new regulations apply?
 - It is hard to say exactly; many more houses would be eligible, but it is challenging to predict the uptake.
- Would the regulations apply to both rental and strata housing?
 - Yes.
- There is no guarantee that these units would be rented; how can we ensure that this update increases the number of available rental units?
 - Even if the units are not secured as rentals, this arrangement is attractive for owners who wish to rent a couple units within a house. Compared to a new build, these units are more likely to be rented.
- How could these newly-created units be secured as rentals?
 - A housing agreement would be registered on title to secure the units as rentals, and this would require Council approval.
- The regulations would allow relatively small units; how is diversity and accessibility in rental stock promoted through these updated regulations?
 - More units could be possible per total floor area. However, the minimum floor areas still allow for unit sizes that are larger than many of the typical unit sizes in multi-family developments in the City.
 - House conversions tend to be quite varied, depending on existing configuration, creating some studio units and some larger units.
- Is there any way to encourage shared resources (e.g. washing machines) to free up unit space?
 - Changes to the requirements around decks and entryways would allow for more usable indoor space within units, rather than multiple indoor entries.

The Committee provided the following feedback:

- support for the opportunities created by the updated regulations
- the need to balance the preservation of neighbourhood character with the need to increase the number of units within the City
- concern that many old houses could be converted
- support for increasing the supply of affordable rental housing
- concern that these regulations would incentive the displacement of existing tenants (similar to demoviction)
- the need for protections for existing tenants

- concern that family homes would be broken up into multiple units, each renting for the original price of the whole house
- housing is more important than the appearance of a neighbourhood.

Staff will follow up with the Committee on ways to provide additional feedback on the proposed updates to the House Conversion Regulations.

6. ADVOCACY MOTIONS TO COUNCIL

The Committee discussed motions to recommend for Council to forward to the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC).

Committee members introduced nine possible motions, and the Committee discussed the strengths and advantages of each potential motion in order to submit three priority motions for Council.

Councillor Loveday joined the meeting at 6:40pm.

Motion:

It was moved by Ashley McKay, seconded by Amy White, that the Renters' Advisory Committee recommend the following motions for Council's consideration to advance to the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC):

2. Amend the Residential Tenancy Act to reduce or eliminate "no pet" clauses in lease agreements;
3. Establish a provincial Standards of Maintenance Policy; and
9. Tax Land and Improvements Separately.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

It was moved by Ashley McKay, seconded by Yuka Kurokawa, that the Renters' Advisory Committee meeting of January 21, 2020 be adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY