

**MINUTES OF THE
RENTERS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 20, 2020**

YUKA KUROKAWA CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 5:31 P.M.

Committee Members Present: Alieda Blandford, Vanessa Hammond, Amy White, Yuka Kurokawa (Chair), Leslie Robinson

Councillors: Jeremy Loveday, Sharmarke Dubow

Staff Present: Hollie McKeil – Housing Planner
Marc Cittone – Senior Planner
Margot Thomaidis – Planning Assistant
Ayla Conklin – Planning Secretary

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Alieda Blandford, that the October 20, 2020 Agenda be approved as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. ADOPTION OF THE MEETING MINUTES

September 15, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Alieda Blandford, that the September 15, 2020 Meeting Minutes be adopted as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Staff provided the Committee with the following updates:

- Request from the Committee to add a member of the public to the next meeting.
 - Staff requested emails of guests and Teams invitation will be provided.

4. VILLAGES AND CORRIDORS PLANNING UPDATE

City staff present an update and invite Renters' Advisory Committee members to attend upcoming engagement events and get the word out.

- Overall goals and objectives of local area planning: making room for diverse housing, equitable growth, resilient communities, sustainable mobility and joyful public spaces.

- Engagement was held in Spring 2020. Feedback included: retain existing affordable housing, enable greater housing diversity with redevelopment, community services amenities, public gathering space, enhanced green space, walkable villages and sustainable transportation.
- First open house scheduled for November 2020 and second open house for Winter/Spring 2021. Promoted through Fernwood, North Park and Quadra neighbourhoods. Feedback gathered from the first open house will be presented to Council before the second open house.
- Overview of strategies and topics relating to local area planning of Fernwood, North Park and Quadra Village.
- Strong encouragement for renters to provide feedback at www.engage.victoria.ca.

The Committee and Marc Cittone discussed:

- Recommendation that vehicle parking is not eliminated entirely. Vehicles are an important asset for families.
 - Clarification that reduction in parking requirements and car-share parking stalls and vehicles are also being considered. Economic analysis and recent rental development trends show that the current requirements are often not viable or reflective of demand.
- Are there strategies that deter green space from turning into homeless encampments?
 - Policy can assist in deterring encampments. The current encampments are hopefully temporary due to the pandemic. Finding housing for the homeless community would be the solution to encampments occupying green space.
- How does the City densify in neighbourhoods with mainly single-family homes?
 - The City is hoping to gain insight on this through the engagement process. Options include amending the Official Community Plan to support rental apartments, city-wide policy updates and design guidelines to support owners who want to pursue densification projects and Residential Rental Tenure Zoning (Rental Zoning).
 - Change is incremental and the City sees value in feedback from all demographics on their needs.
- Recommendation to explore equity and feedback from the wide range of demographics within the tenant sector.
 - There is intersection between local area planning and city-wide strategies around housing. The goal of local area planning is to create opportunities for the many needs of residents in that area.
 - Marc is open to return to the next RAC meeting and discuss feedback from the November 2020 open house.
- Request to consult staff to discuss a local area planning for Fernwood as its own entity.
 - Staff have reviewed the concerns from Fernwood. There will be a neighbourhood plan update. Staff are available to discuss afterwards.

Leslie Robinson joined at 6:37pm.

5. SECURED RENTAL HOUSING PROJECT WORKSHOP

The Renters' Advisory Committee to provide early feedback on the project plan and engagement approach, through a structured group discussion.

- Deliverables for this project:
 - Create a new Secured Rental Housing Policy
 - Improve processes to expedite affordable non-market development
 - Update Rental Replacement Policy
 - Consult on and apply Residential Rental Tenure Zoning, consider new opportunities with incentives.

The Committee discussed:

- Are transient accommodations such as Single Room Occupancy Hotels considered purpose built rental apartments, and if so are they included in this project?
 - Staff agreed that many transient accommodations such as single room occupancy hotels have been operating as long term rental accommodations, and their tenants are vulnerable to displacement. This housing type is different from typical purpose built rental apartments, and the zoning would be different, however, staff may be able to consider this unique form within the rental replacement policy updates.
- Does a building have to have 4 or more rental units? In order to strengthen the Rental Replacement Policy, is it being applied to all rentals?
 - This has not yet been determined and will be considered as part of the update to the Rental Replacement Policy. There may be benefits to applying the policy to all rentals, however, there may also be unintended consequences which need to be identified and considered as policy approaches are developed.
- How does the term Secured Rental Housing and Secured Rental Housing Project differ?
 - Secured rental housing is used to define new rental developments which are secured through legal agreements with the City. The Secured Rental Project title refers to the high-level housing security that are offered by both new and older purpose built rental apartments, which is the focus of the project.
- Are there updates on Rental Zoning? How can we make this tool a priority? There is concern about losing rental units to private ownership and this tool would be an asset. It is difficult to follow specific projects online.
 - There has been lots of progress made since receiving initial Council direction in December 2018. This information will soon be made available on the City's new engagement platform, which has launched this fall. Staff will share with RAC when these updates are made.
 - Specific progress includes:
 - A new schedule was introduced to the zoning bylaw in 2019, which now allows new developments to be added to this schedule.
 - Rental Zoning is a new tool that is being considered for use in all new projects where appropriate, for instance it is currently being

considered for use in both the Villages and Corridors and Missing Middle Housing Projects.

- Council provided new direction in mid 2019, to consult with stakeholders and owners, and to consider the use of Rental Zoning with incentives, which are being developed within the coordinated Secured Rental Project.
- Staff are currently consulting with stakeholder groups this fall
- A research project was published in August 2020, on the Rental Zoning, by the University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning, the Sauder School of Business and Real Estate.
- Staff are bringing forward recommendations for Council to direct 2021 Work Plan Housing Strategy priorities.

Motion:

It was moved by Alieda Blandford, seconded by Vanessa Hammond that the Renters' Advisory Committee recommend that Council direct staff to prioritize the Residential Tenure Zoning implementation plan for the city.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The Committee discussed:

- Households are contextual; they can vary and change. Roommate households differ from the definition of a family household. Recommendation to incentivise roommate housing.
 - Staff will take this into consideration, new policy should promote or enable opportunities for more communal living.
- Co-housing is a strategy that can increase the usage of space.
- Staff asked:
 - Considering the opportunities and constraints, what are your comments on the project objectives?
 - What should the City consider when updating expectations when rental buildings are replaced?
 - What is your level of support for exploring additional incentives to encourage more diverse, and affordable rental housing?
 - What are your suggestions for public engagement?

The Committee discussed:

- The "end of life" of an apartment building is controllable. Maintenance can be implemented to provide a longer life. What is the definition of "end of life"?
- Many buildings were redeveloped to non-profit co-op housing in the 80's/90's. These buildings have been well maintained compared to private rentals.
- Request for this presentation and questions to be provided to RAC members.
- Consider strategies to transfer old rental apartment buildings to non-profit organizations at below-market rates.

- The term “affordable housing” has been defined as being below a specific income threshold. Affordable is contextual and relative. Recommendation to change wording throughout the project.
 - Staff clarified that reference to affordable is relating to “affordable non-market”.
 - Staff clarified “end of life” as a building when the cost of operating the building surpasses the net revenues, including when there are major repairs are needed or when the units are uninhabitable. Project is hoping to both encourage retention of existing rental buildings or if buildings are replaced, seeking to limit tenant displacement where feasible.
- Staff to circulate a survey to collect written feedback, with accompanying presentation for information.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Alieda Blandford that the Renters’ Advisory Committee meeting of October 20, 2020 be adjourned at 7:28 pm.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY