

**MINUTES OF THE
RENTERS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
FEBRUARY 23, 2021**

YUKA KUROKAWA CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 5:02 P.M.

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

Councillors: Sarah Potts, Stephen Andrew

Guest Speakers: Diana Gibson – Executive Director of the Community Social Planning Council

Staff Present: Hollie McKeil – Housing Planner
Chloe Tunis – Tenant Planner
Ayla Conklin – Planning Secretary

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Vanessa Hammond, that the February 23, 2021 Agenda be approved as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. ADOPTION OF THE MEETING MINUTES

January 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Alieda Blandford that the January 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes be adopted as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. GREATER VICTORIA HOUSING RELIEF AND RENT BANK PILOT PROGRAM

Diana Gibson, Executive Director of the Community Social Planning Council provided information on the recently launched Greater Victoria Housing Relief Fund and Rent Bank pilot program.

The Committee discussed:

- What is the funding source for this project?
 - The CRD and Canada's Reaching Home Program. BC Rent Bank for the loan capital. Funding is only approved until April 2021. After this, BC Rent Bank will consider extending but requiring for funds to be matched. Several sources of funding are being explored including, all levels of government, grants, and private donors or foundations.
 - In the longer term, this project would be a balance between loans and grants. Most rent banks are primarily loans. There will be a thorough review after the pilot.
- Where in the region are the most intakes from?

- Data will be collected by postal code and a review of this data is forthcoming.
- Staff are bringing a report forward to seek direction from Council to continue to support this project and participate in Steering Committee meetings.

4. RAC TERM

The current RAC term is set to end in March 2021. RAC may pass a motion with a recommendation to Council to consider extending the term.

The Committee discussed:

- What was the term agreement when RAC was conceptualized?
 - Terms of Reference state a two-year term with a potential for an extension.
- Councillor Andrew – Suggestion that half of the Committee members are replaced every two-year term on a rolling basis. This may be a sustainable way of continuing the Committee.
- Concern that RAC may be discontinued after this one time term extension.
- Consideration for the RAC term to coincide with the municipal election
 - in October 2022.
- Recruitment of new members:
 - Council can direct to fill current Committee member vacancies.
 - Staff will be bringing a report forward with this recommendation.

Motion:

It was moved by Alieda Blandford and seconded by Yuka Kurokawa that Council extends the current term to September 2022 and recruit new members to fill the empty seats.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. PROPOSED RENTAL BUSINESS LICENSING BYLAW

Hollie McKeil, Housing Planner will seek additional feedback from RAC on the proposed *Rental Business Licensing Bylaw*:

- The Survey deadline has been extended until March 2, 2021. A new survey which doesn't require registration on the "Have Your Say" Portal will be shared shortly. RAC's input is valuable.
- Following the completion of the survey, and all one-on-one meetings with targeted stakeholders, the initial feedback period for the bylaw will end. Staff will then bring forward a report to Council for further direction.

The Committee discussed:

- Please provide more information about exemptions, when will they be considered and what might be the conditions expected when they are granted by Council?
 - There are many scenarios to consider, and they would be discretionary, and are proposed to be approved by Council.
 - It would be expected that the bylaw would be brought forward with a policy guidance document, such as the *Tenant Assistance Policy* to help guide consideration of these exemptions.

- Exemptions are included in the New Westminster bylaw and are similarly described. They have had no exemptions to date.
- A suggestion was made for more accessible information for tenants regarding building permits, ownership, licenses, or even a landlord database. Public license information would assist renters to confirm whether their landlord is licensed.
 - Information about property licenses are publicly available; however, they are only available upon request. Any resident can connect with our zoning team (zoning@victoria.ca) to confirm if their suite is legal.
 - There is an opportunity to increase access to information. Resources dedicated to these improvements should be balanced with the value of the information being provided.
- Recommendation that a strong focus be placed on building tenant awareness and understanding, including education, social media, communications, and collaboration with tenant advocacy organisations.

6. RAC MEETING TIMES

Ayla Conklin, Planning Secretary to share the results of the availability survey. RAC members to discuss and decide which recurring meeting time is most suitable. Staff are in place to support RAC and it is the decision of the Committee to determine a time that is best for the group.

The Committee discussed:

- Suggestion to rotate between times on the third Tuesday of the month to facilitate attendance.
- Support for this suggestion to ensure the two members always have an opportunity to attend.
- RAC member confirmed they would be available for 6:30pm to 8:30pm on the third Tuesdays and not the second and fourth Tuesdays.
- Guest speakers can be scheduled at the earlier portion of the meeting and in-house matters in the later portion.
 - Consideration given to meetings with sparse agendas may end at 8pm instead of 8:30pm.
- Can this be re-evaluated at a future time?
 - Yes. It is the responsibility of the Committee members to determine what meeting times are most suitable, while considering availability of staff and Council liaisons.

Motion:

It was moved by Alieda Blandford and seconded by Leslie Robinson that meeting times are moved to the third Tuesday at 630pm-830pm to accommodate as many members as possible.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

7. RENTAL PROPERTIES STANDARDS OF MAINTENANCE BYLAW UPDATE

Chloe Tunis, Tenant Planner provided an update on the *Rental Properties Standards of Maintenance Bylaw* implementation.

The Committee discussed:

- Is there a formal line of communication with enforcement team at the Rental Tenancy Branch (RTB)?
 - The tenant contacted Chloe directly. Chloe then connected with the branch on their behalf. The tenant can go directly to RTB and they will determine if it needs to be forwarded to the enforcement team. This is a new process for the RTB as well.
- The bylaw is not listed on the website and the bylaw that is posted on the Housing Website is the draft bylaw.
 - Staff will update the bylaw on the website.
- There is no inspection and no enforcement provisions in this bylaw, and this will be vocalised by tenant advocacy groups. Concern that this is a human rights violation. Concern that as socio-economic class goes down (owners, tenants and the homeless), bylaw services are decreased.
- Depending on the issue at the property, it could be costly and difficult for the tenant to acquire evidence.
- When will the renoviction bylaw come into effect? Tenants may be concerned to voice maintenance related to the *Rental Property Standards of Maintenance Bylaw* out of fear that they will just be displaced in the end during the renovation.
 - Staff are bringing forward a report to Council in the Spring, and will seek direction for further consultation, which means that Council may be considering a draft bylaw for adoption in late Spring or early Summer.

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Amy White that the Renters' Advisory Committee meeting of February 23, 2021 be adjourned at 7:02 P.M.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY