

**MINUTES OF THE
RENTERS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
MARCH 16, 2021**

ALIEDA BLANDFORD CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 6:40 P.M.

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

Councillors: Councillor Potts, Councillor Andrew

Guest Speakers: Scott McGregor – Director of the Compliance and Enforcement Branch

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

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion:

It was moved by Alieda Blandford, seconded by Leslie Robinson that the March 16, 2021 Agenda be approved as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. ADOPTION OF THE MEETING MINUTES

February 23, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Motion:

It was moved by Alieda Blandford, seconded by Amy White that the February 23, 2021 Meeting Minutes be adopted as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. RESIDENTIAL TENANCY BRANCH – COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

Scott McGregor, Director of the Compliance and Enforcement Unit (CEU) of the Residential Tenancy Branch made a presentation followed by a discussion period.

The Committee discussed:

- Are there more details on illegal lockouts? What should tenants do in this situation?
- If an order is in place for a landlord to pay money to a tenant, does the CEU get involved?
 - This type of order is a monetary order. There are mechanisms of enforcement for monetary orders through the courts. The courts have powers that the CEU don't have access to. The CEU is in place to facilitate all other types of orders which is written in the legislation.
 - Landlords must have an enforcement order through the courts to lockout a tenant. First step for at tenant is to contact the information services line

at the Residential Tenancy Branch. If the situation becomes more serious, the CEU becomes involved. Insufficient resources for CEU to be involved from the beginning of every case. Information services can often handle these cases.

- Chloe Tunis – Can you clarify the process for filing complaints with the CEU?
 - Intake process is primarily through email. Complaints come through a general inbox or by phone. CEU [webpage](#) has complaint forms for advocates, citizens and government agencies.
 - *Residential Tenancy Act* and *Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act* are not well-known to police. There is trepidation for police to enforce this act. They are often coming into an escalated situation between a tenant and landlord. CEU has created an information fact sheet for police and hope to engage them in this type of enforcement. Police may be briefed on this issue but may not get a called on the subject for another three months. Police officers have the authority to uphold provincial laws. Illegal lockout situations are a great opportunity for police to uphold provincial legislation.
- RAC has experience on this subject and is happy to support the education of police in the future.
- Suggestion for Victoria Police to have *Residential Tenancy Act* enforcement training.

4. COVID-19 RESPONSE

Hollie McKeil to discuss the reprioritization of Housing Strategy actions in response to COVID-19 relating to the motion below:

Special Council Meeting June 4, 2020, Motion regarding COVID Recovery Housing Security:

That Council endorse the following Victoria Housing Strategy priorities in 2020 to improve housing security as part of COVID-19 recovery:

- a. Advance and support the rapid supply of affordable and supportive housing in neighbourhoods throughout the City, with government partners and non-profit housing providers;
- b. Bring forward an expanded Rental Property Standards of Maintenance Bylaw for consideration;
- c. Develop a Rental Property Licensing Bylaw to prevent renovictions and demovictions;
- d. Explore the creation of a non-profit administered rent bank on a pilot basis.

The RAC provided input in the preparation of the report to Council and the recommendations for reprioritizing actions on the Housing Strategy in response to COVID-19. These actions have been prioritized as Council directed.

The Committee discussed:

- Councillor Potts – this motion was directly in response to evictions and housing insecurity. Specifically looking at what the City could do to support tenants during COVID-19.
- Concern regarding the City's response to homelessness. Encampments are continuing to be dismantled, and Bylaw and Police officers' priority is to enforce

laws and public safety. Concern that the planning department is not directly involved in the homelessness response. Based on the COVID-19 response motion, it was assumed that all planning projects that focus on private market ownership would be put on hold and planning resources be re-allocated. Recommendation for the planning department to prioritize this issue. There is a housing crisis, and there is hope to see municipal planning support on housing the homeless.

- Councillor Potts – This has been a challenge with Council. Municipalities are not the leaders in building affordable housing, and need to work with other levels of government to see this housing created. The City's work on policies and acquiring land is part of the solution. Hey Neighbour project (for temporary living units in Royal Athletic Park parking lot) has strong advocates within the project. There have been a few motions regarding indoor housing. Most recently, an idea for the City to have its own housing corporation, similar to the Capital Regional District (CRD). This motion morphed into the current emergency plan. This includes opening all community centres and emergency social services. Staff will be coming back with a strategy on this.
- There is a 40-unit apartment building on Pendergast, there is concern that this building will be sold and redeveloped, or tenants will be evicted due to major renovations. Most tenants are seniors and on income assistance. What happens if the building is sold, and how will tenants be protected from displacement, especially during COVID-19?
 - If the building is sold, under the *Residential Tenancy Act*, the new owner cannot evict all the tenants.
 - The province is implementing new legislation to limit evictions of tenants for minor repairs, or predatory 'renovictions' where evictions are made under the guise of renovations. This legislation is moving forward with the timeline to come into effect on July 1, 2021.
 - In a case where the building would be redeveloped, a rezoning application would likely be required and the City has several policies in place to support tenants, including the *Rental Replacement Policy* which requires that rental units be replaced on site and the *Tenant Assistance Policy*.
- Will the *Rental Business Licensing Bylaw* be retro-active when it comes into effect?
 - Unlikely. One of the provincial changes set for July 1, 2021: building permits are required in-hand before issuing eviction notices. It may be unlikely for a new owner to acquire building permits before July 1, 2021.
- Suggestion for co-housing – particularly for seniors. There needs to be a legal framework for this.
- 1120 Rockland Avenue has been fenced off and degrading for years. There is development potential here. There should be a time-limit for empty lots of this sort.
- Clarifying concerns previously discussed – it is not suggested that the City build the housing but rather encouraging the City to create a strategic plan for responding to homelessness. Very happy to see the Hey Neighbour project, how can we see more proposals like this? The City could be addressing this and become a leader in this space.

- Councillor Potts – Every five years the City participates in the Housing Needs Analysis through the CRD. The City needs to advocate to BC Housing for what we need in our city. Right now, were a junior partner in BC Housing’s plan. Our Place is now able to buy property to house multiple people and monitor their wellbeing. In Montreal, they have a right for first refusal on buildings that go up for sale for social housing. Curious where this action is in Victoria.
- There has been the suggestion to disperse encampments and there is potential of displacement. Many people living in parks have belongings and a sense of community. Concern that these people will be dispersed without a tailored plan for housing. The City may not have resources, but it would be great to see the City discuss the needs and stories of those living in the parks.
- Although the Villages and Corridors project is overdue, the Fernwood CALUC members echo that that there are more emergent issues linked to human rights that need to be addressed.
- Concern that the *House Conversions Bylaw* would jeopardize the ability for people to live in large houses together. Do not want to lose rental housing to strata titling housing.
 - A major change of the *House Conversation Bylaw* - there are incentives in place to keep the property as a rental. There is still risk to redevelop to create smaller units.

5. RAC TERM

A follow up discussion regarding RAC term extension. Hollie McKeil brought forward suggestions to improve the previous motion.

Motion:

It was moved by Alieda Blandford and seconded by Amy White that RAC recommends that Council extend the Committee term, for an additional two-year term from April 2021 to November 2023 and rotate membership to provide overlapping terms as follows:

- Fill existing vacancies on the Committee starting in April 2021
- Current (5 members) would finish their term in November 2022 and new members would be appointed for an additional two-year term thereafter.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Should the RAC Term be extended, Chloe Tunis, Tenant Planner, will become the new staff liaison moving forward, and Hollie McKeil, Housing Planner will continue to attend meetings to support and bring forward housing policies for RAC input as needed.

6. RAC 2019-2021 TERM IN REVIEW – DEFERRED TO NEXT MEETING

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

It was moved by Alieda Blandford seconded by Leslie Robinson the Renters’ Advisory Committee meeting of March 16, 2021 be adjourned at 8:02 P.M.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY