

**MINUTES OF THE
RENTERS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
APRIL 20, 2021**

YUKA KUROKAWA CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 6:35 P.M.

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

Staff Present: Chloe Tunis – Tenant Planner
Ayla Conklin – Planning Secretary
Mandi Sandhu - Head, Service Innovation &
Improvement

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Vanessa Hammond that the April 20, 2021 Agenda be approved as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. ADOPTION OF THE MEETING MINUTES

March 16, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Leslie Robinson that the March 16, 2021 Meeting Minutes be adopted as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. RAC TERMS OF REFERENCE UPDATE

Chloe Tunis, RAC staff liaison, provided an update on the staff report to Council and the resulting Terms of Reference update and upcoming member recruitment. A motion was approved by Council to extend the Renters' Advisory Committee indefinitely. An amendment to the Terms of Reference to add language on accessibility drawn from the Accessibility Advisory Committee. Mandi Sandhu introduced herself as a resource for any accessibility issues.

The Committee discussed:

- Clarification on the term “accessibility” – member with lived experience of disability and aspects of limited access. How broad is the mandate of accessibility? Is it a list or a general effort of being inclusive of everyone's needs?
 - Development of the new office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion which looks to equity seeking groups. Not only accessibility related to disabilities but also around racialization, varying ages, indigenous relations. Accessibility is a stream and very broad. This is very new for the City. Aiming to have this new team fully staffed by June 2021.
 - If there are any issues with accessibility with RAC such as

- accommodations, please reach out and include Chloe in the correspondence – support will be offered.
 - Accessibility Advisory Committee recommended a tick box to self-identify. If applicants are not chosen, they will be in the pool of self-identified future applicants.
- Tenant Engagement Toolkit – this document discusses inclusiveness, accessibility, timeliness. Recommendation to review how the toolkit applies to RAC and engaging with tenants and the planning department. Feedback that the City’s engagement is not well targeted.
 - Great suggestion for the governance review.
- Suggestion for City meetings to run on Francis Rules rather than Roberts Rules.
 - Hope that this is in the forefront of the governance review. We run our city as a colonial city with antiquated processes. Agreed that the way the Committees are run is inappropriate. More focus required on peoples lived experience. Discussion, decisions and policy – it is about ones own lived experience and acknowledging other people’s experiences. Supportive of reviewing Committee structure. A new Committee that was formed has really taken the time to discuss power and decision making and how privilege lies.
 - A step forward - what are our rules and norming as a Committee? There are general rules and sometimes Committees can create their own rules.
 - Mandi has challenged Roberts Rules with Legislative Services and hoping we can change this in future and work differently.
- Co-Chair of Committee had no prior experience implementing Roberts Rules. More training on how to Chair and implement meeting rules would be appreciated.
 - This struggle is among all Committees. There is an option to do a 15 minute 101 when we recruit new members.
- How can the Committee connect with [Mandi](#)?
 - Happy to answer any accessibility related questions and please also include the staff liaison.

4. PLANNING TALK SERIES

Staff shared information on an upcoming Planning Talk Series under development. Seeking input from RAC on topic ideas.

Some topic ideas include: a presentation from the Compliance and Enforcement Unit, how municipal and provincial policy intersect, info session for to obtain funding for advocacy group or co-op, housing and how it affects health and presentation from an expert from the University of Victoria.

The Committee discussed:

- Housing futures needs – suggestion to discuss current housing needs rather than having the main focus be on future needs. Disappointment that time in the past has been dedicated to corridors/missing middle which excludes tenants. What is relevant to tenants right now? Focusing on *Standard of Maintenance Bylaw*/provincial legislation and how they are connected. Encouragement for planning department to connect with renters and what the needs are here and now.

- Agreement that the conversation needs to focus on housing right now – there is a crisis that needs to be addressed.
 - Housing futures is broad. Hollie is leading this project and feedback will be forwarded to her.
 - Goal is to engage people in the future.
- *Tenant Assistant Policy* as a topic suggestion. It was an efficient process and RAC made consultation on this.
 - More topic ideas can be provided afterwards via email. Series to start in late summer and go once per month.

5. RENTAL BUSINESS LICENSING BYLAW UPDATE

Chloe Tunis provided a brief project timeline update. Stakeholder engagement is now complete. Staff will be taking a report to Council in the next couple of months for next direction.

The Committee discussed:

- Will RAC have a chance to comment before the report goes to Council? Previously, RAC could provide more comments at this stage in addition to our comments at the start of the project. Similar to the *Tenant Assistance Policy*.
 - This will not be going back to RAC for more consultation. Staff are seeking direction and not necessarily providing a draft of the bylaw going forward. Hollie will have to confirm. We can re-add this item to next meeting.

6. AGE RESTRICTED BUILDINGS - DISCUSSION

Amy White, RAC member, lead a general discussion on age restricted residential buildings in Victoria.

The Committee discussed:

- Review of 55+ and potential that these buildings are discriminating. How are these buildings permitted? It's only allowed in previously built buildings and not new builds. The City is desperate for housing and families are being left out of this sector of housing. Comparing this time of discrimination to aged-based segregation. There are some buildings that are 45+ and this age is not considered a senior. If it were the other way around, buildings could not be labelled as being under 50. This may be a strata issue - but can also apply to renters.
- Member is 55+ and enjoys and encourages living in a building that is a mix of families, singles and new mothers. Denying someone housing because they are in a category is a denial for their right to housing. There was an organization in Ontario that reviewed the discrimination of adult-only buildings. It became illegal to discriminate against families. This is a human rights issue.
- Section 10 of *Human Rights Code* specifically describes aged-based restrictions as non-discriminatory. Suggestion to consult the context of the wording below:

“(2) Subsection (1) does not apply in the following circumstances

- (i) if the space is a rental unit in residential premises in which every rental unit is reserved for rental to a person who has reached 55 years

[of age or to 2 or more persons, at least one of whom has reached 55 years of age, or...](#)

- An action in the Housing Strategy is to review barriers for tenants - such as age restrictions and rental restrictions. This is only applicable to new development. The *Strata Property Act* has interpretation guidelines such as: you cannot discriminate based on age for tenants but is allowable for owners. A legal agreement is on the workplan for next year.
- More focus on families and women who have been displaced for becoming pregnant. There are several 55+ buildings and it is an opportunity to be more inclusive.
 - Are you referencing rental buildings or strata buildings?
 - Either. Mostly strata buildings that are being rented out. It's not clear who is operating these buildings.
 - May not be possible to have a 55+ rental building but it is possible with strata.
- It is legal to have restricted housing (disabilities, 55+..) because it is meeting a need for a group of people who are less likely to have basic needs met. Often described as supportive housing.
 - Yes, this is the case. An action of the Housing Strategy is to look at reducing barriers such as age restrictions for renters. This is on the City's the workplan for next year. Option to include this in an updated workplan for RAC.
 - Support for this.
- Recurring comment for the City to explore co-housing. A potential source of housing for people who are living alone.
 - This is also mentioned in the Housing Strategy for 2022.
- Co-Housing as a planning talk series topic.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa seconded by Leslie Robinson the Renters' Advisory Committee meeting of April 20, 2021 be adjourned at 7:31 P.M.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY