

MINUTES OF THE RENTERS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

October 18, 2022

1. Ryan Moen called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Committee Members (7): Ryan Moen (Chair)
Heather Kirkham
Leslie Robinson
Trevor Premack
Ramya GN Reddy (leave at 7:30)
Stefanie Hardman
Neha Sharma

Regrets: Councillor Potts, Councillor Andrew

Staff Present: Rory Stever – Tenant Assistance Planner
Andrew Cusack – Senior Planner, Housing Policy
Ayla Conklin – Planning Secretary

Guest Speaker: Antonia Mah – Together Against Poverty Society

2. Approval of Agenda

The committee discussed:

- Request to add an item in the parking lot to discuss a subcommittee to discuss tenant protections and densification plans.

Motion:

It was moved by Neha Sharma, seconded by Ramya GN Reddy,
that the October 18, 2022 Agenda be approved as amended.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. Adoption of Meeting Minutes

September 20, 2022, Meeting Minutes

Motion:

It was moved by Trevor Premack, seconded by Stefanie Hardman,
that the September 20, 2022 Meeting Minutes be adopted as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. Together Against Poverty Society Rental Property Standards of Maintenance (RPSOM) Report

Antonia Mah, Together Against Poverty Society, presented the TAP RPSOM report.

The committee discussed:

- Did any tenants reaching out to TAPS for support have knowledge about the bylaw before they contacted TAPS?
 - Tenants are more recently aware of the RPSOM bylaw before TAPS informs them.
- Are there income thresholds for clients who access services?

- TAPS does not have a financial requirement for services. If someone requires representation, TAPS provides services to anyone requiring support while also remaining clear on their capacity. TAPS has been focusing on renovations rather than repair-related disputes.
- How long has Vancouver been doing their own enforcement?
 - Unsure, Antonia can follow up.
- How fulsome was the conversation with the City to provide repairs?
 - There is precedent for this. Vancouver has implemented this. The City would not make the repair. The City would contract out the repairs and bill the landlord.
- Did the tenants receive any retribution from the landlords after filing a complaint?
 - Tenants are forced to choose between exercising their rights and risking the landlord-tenant relationship. Some tenants feel the risk is too great.
- Can this information be made available at Service Canada? This could support new immigrants and newcomers.

Motion:

It was moved by Leslie Robinson, and seconded by Ryan Moen,

that the RAC receive the TAPS Report monitoring the *Rental Property Standards of Maintenance Bylaw*. The RAC endorses recommendations #2 and #3.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

- Is there a specific definition of a “tenant”? The RPSOM bylaw states that it covers people who are covered by the RTA. Roommates may be excluded if they are not on the lease.

Motion:

It was moved by Leslie Robinson, and seconded by Neha Sharma,

that the RAC recommends to Victoria City Council that funds be allocated for a program to inform tenants and landlords of the requirements of the RPSOM bylaw.

Discussion:

Friendly amendment of the language: ~~educational program~~ to program to inform.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

- Can a tenant withhold rent until the landlord remediates a repair?
 - The scope of the Compliance and Enforcement Unit has changed throughout the last year. The latest news is that they simply can't take on repair/maintenance issues.
 - Withholding of rent typically comes after the administrative penalty.
- Is the withholding of rent the ability to never pay the rent of the previous months, or to withhold until after the repair is completed?
 - TAPS suggests an order, then a rent reduction. Further escalation includes rent withholding.
- How would a tenant bring forward extraneous health situations linked to the repair?
 - Starts with RTB by providing specific evidence, then applying for compensation.

5. RAC New Member Orientation

New members joining in January 2023. New orientation will include the following:

1. Municipal process

- a. How a report goes to council
- b. How motions go to council
- c. How motions are made
- d. Roberts Rules
- e. Who are councillor liaisons and how are they appointed

2. Jurisdiction Review

- a. What the City oversees and has control of

3. What the City is doing on Housing Policy currently

- a. Housing Strategy, Housing Needs Assessment
- b. What projects are already in motion
- c. What other municipalities are doing

The committee discussed:

- Recommendation for a document “Expectations and Learning Outcomes” similar to college courses.
 - 2023 Work Plan will be the RAC version of that.
- Recommendation for more scenarios and the discussion on the impact on tenants.
- Recommendation to split up orientation over two meetings.
- Recommendation to review the governance review report section on advisory committees before commencing any work.
- Recommendation to have images on the screen while a person is talking. No words on the screen and talking at the same time.
- Recommendation to have previous members pass on knowledge to the new members to inform next year’s process at the next meeting or before the next meeting.
 - Staff can prepare a survey to gather feedback.
- How many new committee members will join?
 - Five new members. Recruiting is across for three or four weeks. RAC members will be notified.
- Recommendation to have an orientation package go to new and current members.
- Recommendation for an exit survey with every resignation or term-end.
- When will the councillor liaisons be appointed?
 - They are expected to be appointed and attend the November 2022 meeting.

6. Parking Lot

Motion:

It was moved by Leslie Robinson, and seconded by Ryan Moen,

That the RAC strike a subcommittee to study and make recommendations regarding tenant protections and retention of affordable rental housing in the context of current and future plans for densification of housing in the city through proposals such as the Missing Middle, Villages and Corridors and amendment to Local Area Plans.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The committee discussed:

- Request for information on how the TAP is applied, the proposals/status of MMI, the status of tenant protections related to densification and how the City tracks the gain and losses of rentals. It would be helpful to have staff in attendance.
 - Staff can share links to the documents.
- Subcommittee to meet before the next RAC meeting.

7. Adjournment

Motion:

It was moved by Ryan Moen, seconded by Leslie Robinson,

that the Renters' Advisory Committee meeting of October 18, 2022 be adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY