

**MINUTES OF THE
RENTERS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
JUNE 15, 2021**

YUKA KUROKAWA CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 6:30 P.M.

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

Councillors Present: Councillor Sarah Potts

Staff Present: Chloe Tunis – Tenant Planner
Ayla Conklin – Planning Secretary
Margot Thomaidis – Planning Assistant
Ross Soward – Senior Planner of Affordable Housing
Andrew Cusack – Senior Housing Planner

Guest Speakers: Diana Gibson – Executive Director of the Community Social Planning Council
Sinan Demirel – Senior Researcher with Community Social Planning Council

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Leslie Robinson that the June 15, 2021 Agenda be approved as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. ADOPTION OF THE MEETING MINUTES

May 18, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Alieda Blandford that the May 18, 2021 Meeting Minutes be adopted as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The committee discussed:

- Request to receive minutes within one week from when the meeting occurred.
 - We can discuss on possibly publishing them sooner. Not possible for one week after the meeting occurred, potentially two weeks after or before the following meeting agenda.

3. NEW STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

Introduction of Andrew Cusack, Senior Housing Planner and Ross Soward, Senior Planner of Affordable Housing Development.

The committee discussed:

- Concern that more resources are being used for new rental housing rather than preserving the affordability of older purpose built rental stock. Does your position address this?
 - This has been identified.
 - This is an action on the Housing Strategy
- Suggestion for co-housing.
- Concern for the unhoused that are being transitioned into hotels led by BC Housing. These housing solutions are not protected by the *Rental Tenancy Act*. Request for RAC to have input on supportive housing projects. Not all people that are unhoused require behaviour supports.
- Request for the memorandum of understanding signed between the City of Victoria and BC Housing be provided to RAC.
 - Councillor Potts – Yes, will share this document.
- Concern that CALUC's (Community Association Land Use Committee) are not a diverse representation of their communities. Request for RAC to comment on increasing representation on CALUC's. CALUC's face challenges reaching underrepresented groups.

4. RENT BANK DISCUSSION

Diana Gibson – Executive Director of the Community Social Planning Council and Sinan Demirel – Senior Researcher with Community Social Planning Council provided a brief overview of the wrap-around work the CPSC is providing alongside the Rent Bank program.

The program is emergency support for a one-time crisis and the prevention of more intense symptoms of homelessness. Includes a combination of case management with loans and grants for financial support. The program has prevented 150 households from losing their housing.

The grant portion of the program has been exhausted due to high need. There is ongoing pursuit for funding to replenish grants. The program will continue as a loan program. Loan program has flexibility through forgiveness and the aim is that no hardships are created by repayment. The loan program also creates an opportunity for applicants to build up a positive credit history.

The committee discussed:

- Critical of Rent Bank programs when the root of the issue is better housing policy. Concern that one-time funding becomes the support rather than addressing the high cost of rent. Would people living in BC Housing led transitional housing in former hotels be eligible?
 - This program has served people moving out of the BC Housing funded transitional housing.
- How is the funding being acquired?
 - Only one year of funding is secured. March 2022 new funding is required.
 - Small portion from United Way, COVID-19 Pilot grant funding and provincial rent bank funding. Currently seeking Reaching Home for grant funding and municipal support for next year.
 - The reason this program was designed was because tenants were in rent

arrears that had no means of repaying. The average tenant in the program has been paying more than 71.5% of their income in rent. Tenants would not have the margins to pay rent arrears.

- Councillor Potts – Are there residents from Victoria relating to demovictions in the program?
 - There is some anecdotal evidence of people experiencing demovictions accessing the service.
 - There is data showing where households were from and likely some data on this issue. Data can be generated by geographical area. See some on hand data below:

Municipality	Approximate % of all applicants
Victoria	45.9
Saanich	20
Langford	15
Esquimalt	12
Colwood	2
Miscellaneous	4.4

- Tenant Assistance Plan only applies for rezoning which leaves many scenarios that aren't covered. July 1, 2021 new Provincial legislation being passed to support tenants with demovictions.
- Request to make a recommendation to Council to suggest the City of Victoria provide as much funding as possible to help with the Rent Bank.
- Is there follow up with those who receive grants? Is the housing stability maintained for those applicants?
 - During the pilot period the program was reaching out to applicants that received grants. Some were still struggling and were provided more support. Many households advised the one-time support met their needs. However, individuals paying over 71% of their income in rent, which is the case for some applicants, may not sustain their housing through another crisis/emergency.
- How can RAC best support the Rent Bank?
 - Staff recommend for the committee to make a motion that is specific.
 - CSPC is seeking long-term funding for the Rent Bank in the next fiscal year.
 - What is the timing requirement for such a motion?
 - Concern that the broken housing system is being reinforced by Rent Bank programs. Suggestion for the motion to include that this isn't an answer to affordability, rather a solution for crisis.
 - CSPC supports this language.
 - Suggestion to draft motion in Fall 2021.

5. COMMITTEE CHECK-IN

Chloe Tunis, Tenant Planner, provided information on new committee member recruitment and check-in with committee on summer break. Recruitment will occur over the summer and into September 2021. Once information is published, RAC will be included.

The committee discussed:

- Are there topics over the summer that would require consultation?
 - Nothing that is time sensitive. If there is a time sensitive item, we can set up the meeting.
- Request to finish up some actions in the minutes that may have fallen off: Rent Bank motion drafting, training for police on evictions, unfinished business with licensing project etc.
- Renter Engagement Strategy as an emerging topic.
- Request for an update on *Rental Property Standards of Maintenance Bylaw*.
- Suggestion to meet before September and the new group joins.
- Suggestion for more of an informal round table discussion rather than a strict agenda.
 - Suggestion to meet in August to wrap up any items through an open discussion. Staff can review and compile a list of any lost action items.
- New members projected to attend in October 2021.

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Alieda Blandford that the Renters' Advisory Committee meet one time over the summer break in August 2021.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa seconded by Alieda Blandford the Renters' Advisory Committee meeting of June 15, 2021 be adjourned at 7:52 P.M.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY