

**MINUTES OF THE
RENTERS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
JUNE 21, 2022**

1. Yuka Kurokawa called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

Committee Members: Ryan Moen (Co-Chair)
Yuka Kurokawa (Co-Chair)
Carrie Chapple
Heather Kirkham
Leslie Robinson
Neha Cradle
Ramya GN Reddy
Trevor Premack

Regrets: Stefanie Hardman
Azmina Janmohammed
Alieda Blandford
Rory Stever – Tenant Assistance Planner
Councillor Andrew

Councillors Present: Councillor Potts

Guest Speakers: Diana Gibson – Executive Director, Community Social
Planning Council
Julietta Perucca – The Shift
Sam Freeman – The Shift
Latonya Ludford – The Shift

Staff Present: Andrew Cusack – Senior Planner, Housing Policy
Julie Edney – Housing Planner
Ayla Conklin – Planning Secretary

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Carrie Chapple, that the June 21, 2022 Agenda be approved.

Discussion:

- Request to amend to include discussion of a motion regarding committee process put forward via email in May 2022.
 - Suggestion to put this item in the parking lot.
 - Request to have this as a standalone item rather than in the parking lot.

Motion:

It was moved by Leslie Robinson, seconded by Ryan Moen, that the June 21, 2022 Agenda be amended to include the discussion of a motion regarding committee process put forward via email in May 2022.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. Adoption of Meeting Minutes

April 19, 2022, Meeting Minutes

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Carrie Chapple, that the April 19, 2022 Meeting Minutes be adopted as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. Rent Bank Pilot Program – Community Social Planning Council Update

Dianna Gibson, Executive Director, Community Social Planning Council provided an update.

The committee discussed:

- Would non-repayable loan or grant funds be considered declared income?
 - Generally, it's not considered income. It's paid directly to landlords, utilities, or grocery cards.
- What is the income threshold of the applicants? Were there people who weren't eligible?
 - The income thresholds are flexible to accommodate unexpected and vulnerable circumstances.
- What is the turnaround time to get support after someone's first point of contact?
 - Staff prioritize and triage based on risk and vulnerability. Fast turn around time.
- Is it possible for RAC to make a request to Council to secure more funding after the next election?
 - The program has provincial funding that requires matching funds, which are provided by the City of Victoria and United Way for operations and loans. The City of Victoria has been a leader for other municipalities. Staff are hired on a long-term basis. Funding is currently year to year, although the ideal would be to have funding for several years.
- Are students eligible? Are seniors eligible?
 - The United Way is working on a grant program proposal to support women fleeing violence. The United Way has also worked on a proposal to support families staying in hotels. Students are eligible if they are 19+. This program is focused on short-term crisis and one of the requirements is that there is an active Tenancy Agreement or there will be in the next three months. On occasion, they would still support an applicant that does not have a Tenancy Agreement.
- Do you have data on the applicants?
 - An evaluation report is being released this Thursday. Data is for Greater

Victoria rather than just the City of Victoria. City of Victoria funding, specifically the grants, is used for residents of Victoria. City of Victoria statistics will be pulled in the future.

- Andrew Cusack: The City of Victoria supported the development of the initial Rent Bank pilot program. When the CSPC presented the Rent Bank pilot report and a request for continued funding to Council, a motion by the RAC in support of this program was included in the accompanying staff report. Another RAC motion expressing support today is not required as it is not being presented for consideration by Council. When the Rent Bank is being brought to Council in the future, it will come to the RAC first for comment.
- How many people can afford to repay their loans?
 - An example is during a waiting period. The Rent Bank can bridge those funds. It's not necessarily a ten year payment plan for \$3,000, which is the maximum loan amount. There is also a loan forgiveness program.

5. Tenant Capacity Building Project

City staff provided a project update supported by Julietta Perucca, Sam Freeman and Latonya Ludford from The Shift.

The committee discussed:

- The right to housing is also the right to housing supply. There is affordable housing that is being lost due to development. Request for tools to address the preservation of affordable rental housing throughout the development process. The decisions on land use are an important connection to tenants.
- Is The Shift in touch with [Victoria Tenant Action Group \(VTAG\)](#)?
 - The right to housing has a large implication from government decisions linked to human rights. This includes transparency with land use. The Shift will be reaching out to VTAG again.
 - Leslie Robinson can represent VTAG as several board members are no longer with the organization.
- In the toolkit, there is focus on providing knowledge and resources to tenants on how they can empower themselves individually. Suggestion to include information and resources on how they can advocate on several levels (structural, institutional and systemic levels). These issues can be very systemic.
- How will the toolkit be disseminated and how can tenants access it?
 - Hope to partner with local non-profits (maybe [Together Against Poverty Society](#)) and happy to take the RAC's feedback. The partnership with non-profits, local organizations and service providers ensures it is informed by our community and not created from the top down or academic exercise.
- Suggestion for the creation of a tenant registry to collect the necessary data to show that renters are being pushed out of the city; e.g., rent increases, duration, etc.. Hope to improve the tenant network so this toolkit can be circulated and used.
 - Is there already a tenant union or network that could be tapped into? There has been a lack of access to data in general as the research begins.
- Reintroduction of The Shift team.
 - The Shift is an independent international Human Rights organization. Canadian-based work is housed under the Canadian Urban Institute. The global director is [Leilani Farha](#), the former United Nations special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing. The Shift's goal is to work with residents, local organizations, and all levels of government (in Canada and abroad) to

recognize the right to housing and implement solutions that address this crisis globally.

- Councillor Potts: Will The Shift be reviewing the existing tenant protection policies? There are some strong policies, but they may also lack effectiveness. This report will assist Council to advocate to the province.
 - The Shift welcomes feedback from city councillors. They are conducting a rental-focused policy scan for Victoria to highlight possible gaps, best practices, and needed advocacy. The Shift is working with four other municipalities across Canada which is supported by the [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation \(CMHC\)](#). There will be a report outlining the recommendations for the City to recognize the right to housing.
- Councillor Potts: Suggestion to review the *Tenant Assistance Policy* and its efficacy. If the process is not easy, a new tool may need fine-tuning.
- What resources does The Shift have? What weight does this organization hold to recommend amending the *Local Government Act*?
 - The Shift is researching what is required from all levels of government to recognize the right to housing in Victoria.
 - The Shift visited the City of Toronto last summer and a report has been completed. Their report is now used by the city to advocate to multiple levels of government. The final report for Victoria could be presented to Council and possibly the RAC. The Shift can also advocate to the CMHC, the provincial and federal governments to recommend more funding support and competencies. After the report is published, The Shift's director can engage and advocate with higher levels of government. The renter toolkit is different in that it will be focused on helping tenants in Victoria to understand what protections are in place and monitor efficacy.
- Leilani Farha wrote a great [report](#) about encampments. The City of Victoria did not follow the recommendations in this report. Concern that there are reports that still don't create change.
 - The Shift was on Pandora Avenue this morning to discuss the experiences of bylaw officers and people living in situations of homelessness. This will be included as part of a separate advocacy report.
- The RAC has provided guidance on how to reach tenants through the Tenant Engagement Toolkit, has this been provided?
 - Yes – The toolkit is being used for designing the engagement plan for this project.
- How will The Shift be engaging for follow up on this project?
 - Andrew Cusack: Initially discussed forming a subcommittee. Subcommittee meetings will be scheduled as required for the project. A summary of that work can then be presented to the entire committee.
 - Coordinating meeting times is a challenge since The Shift team is based in several different time zones (Switzerland, United Kingdom, Eastern Canada).

6. RAC Summer Meeting Schedule

The results of the availability poll were presented to members showing that July 19, 2022 is the best meeting date over the summer.

The committee discussed:

- Hope to bring the RAC's resolutions to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) conference in September.

- Councillor Potts: The conference is held digitally from September 12-16, 2022. Councillor Potts is happy to meet during August through a subcommittee for members who are interested. There is a meeting next week to discuss more details on the UBCM conference.

Motion:

It was moved by Ryan Moen, seconded by Yuka Kurokawa, that the RAC strike a subcommittee to discuss UBCM in August 2022.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

- Andrew Cusack: What additional advocacy opportunities are there for the RAC in the upcoming UBCM conference?
- There were several emails and in-person advocacy opportunities for the previous UBCM conference. Councillor Potts was a great support for moving the resolutions forward.
- Has the RAC been liaising with the [Local Government Management Association \(LGMA\)](#)?
 - Sarah Potts: Councillors aren't linked to this organization.
 - Andrew Cusack: We are not familiar with that organization.

7. Discussion on a Motion Regarding Committee Process

Motion:

It was moved by Leslie Robinson, seconded by Heather Kirkham,

That the Renters' Advisory Committee requests of city staff that their consultations with the RAC follow these guidelines:

1. Presentation material be provided at least two weeks in advance of the meeting intended for discussion.
2. Presentation material to include a summary of how the subject matter of the consultation impacts renters and the supply of rental housing.
3. Staff attending RAC meetings for such consultations make the assumption that RAC members have reviewed material provided. The RAC does not require a re-presentation of material that has been provided in advance but does need time for questions and clarifications.
4. Materials provided by staff for RAC advising clearly outlines the topics and items about which RAC's advice is being sought.

The committee discussed:

- This motion arises from the Local Area Plan, Village and Corridors and Missing Middle Housing Project agenda items. There is concern that these presentations that seek the RAC's feedback are already final products. There is no essential discussion on the impact of tenants related to these projects. Request for the presentations provided to the RAC to include a summary to specifically describe the impact on renters rather than the repeating of information. The goal is for the dialogue with staff to improve, rather than the RAC solely receiving information. Hope to clarify exactly what staff are seeking from the RAC. It's important to ensure that conversations are experience focused.

- The motion is centred around city staff and resources. Curious to hear more from staff on the scope and feasibility of these actions.
- Agreed - more opportunities for fulsome discussion and sharing perspective is valuable. It is of note that the RAC is a volunteer position, and the labour commitment must be considered.
- There was confusion on why the RAC was consulted on the Villages and Corridors project.
 - Councillor Potts: There are similar conversations with the [Accessibility Advisory Committee](#). The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion team is working with them to review the process by which the City communicates with committees. This is an important issue for committees and there is work being done that would support this recommendation.
 - Andrew Cusack: Providing background materials two weeks in advance may not be possible. Projects that come to the RAC are being actively worked on and could look very different one week prior to the meeting versus two weeks from the meeting. It's possible that a briefing note might address many of the feedback points raised. Staff will discuss to see what is possible and revert to the RAC with feedback. Including background information as part of presentations to the RAC is still helpful in order to make sure that the group has a common understanding of the topic. It is also important to keep the RAC informed on the progress of projects that have been previously discussed. Therefore, some projects come to the RAC solely for information.
 - In all discussions about Local Area Planning, there was no discussion of the impacts on tenants. There is concern that this project will create a loss of affordable housing stock. Request to discuss the loss of housing stock in the future.
 - Andrew Cusack: Great feedback on how to introduce projects. Housing staff have put a significant amount of work into Local Area Planning, Villages and Corridors and Missing Middle projects. The RAC's feedback is important for these projects as they are directed by Council.
- There is also a commitment by RAC members for increased preparation before a meeting to ensure a fulsome discussion is achieved at a meeting.
 - Andrew Cusack: Staff will report back on the feasibility of the request.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

8. ~~Parking Lot~~

9. Adjournment

Motion:

It was moved by Yuka Kurokawa, seconded by Ryan Moen, that the Renters' Advisory Committee meeting of June 21, 2022 be adjourned at 8:25 pm.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY