



RENTERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

March 30, 2017

A meeting of the Renters Advisory Committee was held on Thursday, March 30, 2017, at 5:35 pm, in Committee Room 1, Third Floor, Vancouver City Hall.

PRESENT: Karen Sawatzky, Acting Chair
Karen Ameyaw
Natasha Edgar
Peter Harvie
Jaraad Marani
Annie Martin
Samrah Mian
Daniel Oleksiuk
Noah Quastel
Andrew Sakamoto
Alvin Singh
Maddison Spenrath
Andrea Winkler

ABSENT: Meseret Taye

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Andrea Reimer (Council Liaison)
Councillor Tim Stevenson (Council Liaison)

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE: Lori Isfeld, Meeting Coordinator

Approval of Minutes

MOVED by Karen Ameyaw
SECONDED by Peter Harvie

THAT the minutes of the Renters Advisory Committee meeting held November 23, 2016, be approved.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

1. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

The Committee agreed to postpone election of Chair and Vice-Chair for the 2017-2018 term until the next Regular Meeting, and that Karen Sawatzky assume the role as Acting Chair in the interim.

2. Committee Orientation

The Meeting Coordinator along with the Acting Chair reviewed several items covered in the Guidelines for Civic Agencies, Code of Conduct policy and other Committee processes including communication between members and document sharing. The Meeting Coordinator advised a new Civic Agency work plan template has been developed to aid in meeting the requirement of a yearly work plan that is circulated to Mayor and Council.

3. Review of Past Committee Activities

The Past Chair and Acting Chair provided an overview of Committee activities from 2015 to 2017, including motions approved by the Committee, Subcommittees, projects and the Facebook page.

4. Liaison Updates

Councillor Stevenson provided updates and made note of the continuing issue of pets in rental housing.

5. Members Community Updates

Alvin Singh provided an update regarding the Housing Reset item that went to Council on March 27 and 28, 2017. Noah Quastel provided an overview of the Renters Charter project he is working on.

6. New Business

(a) Applications to Build Purpose-Built Rental Housing on the City's Website

The Acting Chair introduced a motion regarding Applications to Build Purpose-Built Rental Housing on the City's Website.

Following discussion, it was,

MOVED by Daniel Oleksiuk
SECONDED by Noah Quastel

WHEREAS

1. The rental vacancy rate in the City of Vancouver is unhealthily low and has been so for decades;
2. The City of Vancouver has specific targets for the creation of new purpose-built market and non-market rental housing;
3. The City of Vancouver's Renters Advisory Committee would like to better understand how many units of market and non-market purpose-built rental housing are being applied for as well as the type and location of that housing;

4. The number, type and location of purpose-built market and non-market rental housing that is being applied for, as well as other details of individual rental projects, are also matters of wide public interest, due to the city's extremely low rental vacancy rate and the acute lack of housing affordability;
5. The City of Vancouver produces an Annual Housing Report Card with information about the number of purpose-built and other types of rental housing units approved and completed, but there is a considerable and unavoidable time lag between when that report card is published and when individual projects are applied for;
6. There is no easy and quick way to tell just by looking at the long lists of applications on the development permit or rezoning sections of the City's website which ones are for purpose-built rental units and which are for condominiums; and
7. It would be easier for the general public and anyone with an interest in rental housing or specific rental projects to understand what rental projects were being proposed if those applications were identified and gathered in one section of the City's website, and that would also be consistent with the City's transparency and public engagement goals;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

THAT the City of Vancouver's Renters Advisory Committee recommends Vancouver City Council direct staff to investigate changing its website so that all applications to build new purpose-built rental housing can be found on one clearly labelled page or section of the City's website.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

(b) Category for Purpose-Built Rental Housing in its Annual Urban Design Awards Competition

The Acting Chair introduced a motion regarding including a category for purpose-built rental housing in the City's Annual Urban Design Awards Competition.

Following discussion, it was,

MOVED by Jaraad Marani
SECONDED by Daniel Oleksiuk

WHEREAS

1. There is a documented record of stigma and negative associations attached to purpose-built rental housing in the city of Vancouver, as well as in many other Canadian and North American cities, due, in part, to long-standing cultural biases in favour of single-family detached housing and homeownership;

2. Purpose-built rental housing is a vital form of housing in the city of Vancouver;
3. The City of Vancouver has taken various steps to encourage the creation of more purpose-built rental housing;
4. The City of Vancouver holds an Annual Urban Design Awards competition to encourage design excellence in buildings and the public realm, and those awards have categories for small-scale, medium-scale and large-scale residential buildings;
5. There is no category in the City's Annual Urban Design Awards that specifically recognizes excellence in the design of purpose-built rental housing; and
6. Recognizing excellence in the design of purpose-built rental buildings would be a small way to lessen the stigma associated with purpose-built rental housing and instead celebrate and encourage the creation of innovative and/or beautiful purpose-built rental housing;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

THAT the City of Vancouver's Renters Advisory Committee recommends Vancouver City Council to investigate adding a purpose-built rental housing category to its Annual Urban Design Awards.

carried

AMENDMENT MOVED by Noah Quastel
SECONDED by Annie Martin

THAT the following be added at the end of the motion:

FURTHER THAT affordability be a factor to be considered and that renters or persons representing renters organizations have a role in the decision-making process.

LOST

(Karen Ameyaw, Nathasha Edgar, Peter Harvie, Jaraad Marani, Samrah Mian, Daniel Oleksiuk, Andrew Sakamoto, Karen Sawatzky, Alvin Singh, Maddison Spennath and Andrea Winkler opposed)

The amendment having lost, the motion was put and CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

(c) Collective Housing

Daniel Oleksiuk introduced Jen Muranetz and Warren Bowen who reported on their experience living in collective houses. Both guests expressed concern regarding the Zoning and Development By-law No. 3575 because it sets out that having more than five unrelated people living together in one dwelling is illegal, and that the definition of "family" needs to be updated to allow for collective living.

Following discussion, it was,

MOVED by Jaraad Marani
SECONDED by Daniel Oleksiuk

THAT the Renters Advisory Committee requests staff to report back to the Committee at the earliest opportunity, on the matter of collective housing and the definition of “family” as set out in the Zoning and Development By-law No. 3575.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

(d) Renters Questionnaire for Upcoming Provincial Election Candidates

Karen Ameyaw put forward a suggestion that the Committee create a questionnaire on renters issues to be sent to provincial election candidates.

Following discussion, it was,

MOVED by Alvin Singh
SECONDED by Jaraad Marani

THAT the Renters Advisory Committee empowers Karen Ameyaw, in consultation with the Committee, to produce a questionnaire on renters issues that will be distributed to Vancouver provincial election candidates and party leaders.

FURTHER THAT the results of the questionnaire will be shared publicly.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Alvin Singh
SECONDED by Karen Ameyaw

THAT the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Next Meeting:

DATE: Wednesday, May 24, 2017
TIME: 5:30 pm
PLACE: Committee Room 1, Third Floor, City Hall

The Committee adjourned at 7:30 pm.

* * * * *