



RENTERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

October 12, 2016

A meeting of the Renters Advisory Committee was held on Wednesday, October 12, 2016, at 5:35 pm, in Committee Room 1, Third Floor, Vancouver City Hall.

PRESENT: Alvin Singh, Chair
Karen Ameyaw
Miran Aziz
John Brabbins
Jessie Fletcher
Peter Harvie
Nicola Hill, Vice-Chair
Meseret Taye*
Jane Mayfield
Josh Prowse
Noah Quastel

ABSENT: David Isaac
Mira Oreck (Leave of Absence)
Daniel Oleksiuk (Leave of Absence)
Karen Sawatzky (Leave of Absence)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Andrea Reimer (Council Liaison)

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE: Lori Isfeld, Meeting Coordinator

* Denotes absence for a portion of the meeting.

Leave of Absence Requests

MOVED by Alvin Singh
SECONDED by Nicola Hill

THAT the Renters Advisory Committee approve leaves of absence for Mira Oreck, Daniel Oleksiuk and Karen Sawatzky, for this meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY
(Meseret Taye absent for the vote)

Approval of Minutes

MOVED by Nicola Hill
SECONDED by Karen Ameyaw

THAT the minutes of the Renters Advisory Committee meeting held June 8, 2016,
be approved.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY
(Meseret Taye absent for the vote)

Review of Civic Agency Guidelines

The Meeting Coordinator distributed copies of the Civic Agency Guidelines document and made note of the sections describing the process for approval of motions and letters to external agencies.

1. Landlord BC Presentation on Landlord Registry

Postponed to a future meeting.

2. Empty Homes Tax - Staff Briefing

Sarah Ellis, Planner, Housing Policy and Projects, provided a presentation regarding housing challenges in the city including the large number of empty homes, insufficient rental stock, and affordability challenges. She provided an update on the implementation of the empty homes tax and reviewed strategies to protect existing and create new rental stock. Discussion, questions and suggestions ensued. Ms. Ellis welcomed suggestions from the Committee on criteria for the empty homes tax, noting public consultation is taking place this fall. She also noted there will be a report back to City Council on the empty homes tax in November, 2016.

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At 6:35 pm the Committee agreed to vary the order of the agenda to deal with the New Business motion regarding Vacate Clauses next.

The minutes are recorded in numerical order for ease of reference.

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3. Hackathon - Report Back

Joshua Prowse and Councillor Reimer reported on two proposals put forward at the Hackathon new product building event they attended in September.

4. State of Renters Report Project - Follow Up

The Chair provided an update on the State of Renters Report project which involves advocating for renters through renter stories and tracking metrics and opinions around rental housing, in order to gain a better understating of the realities facing renters in Vancouver. He also provided tentative timelines for survey development and report compilation, noting he would be seeking input from the Committee on potential survey metrics.

5. Liaison Updates

Councillor Reimer provided updates on several recent and upcoming housing and rental-related reports to Council. She noted the 2017 Operating Budget report is slated for December.

Councillor Reimer also reminded members that their term ends in February 2017, and that the application to re-apply is now available online.

6. Member Updates

No updates were provided.

7. New Business

(a) Motion - Vacate Clauses

Noah Quastel introduced a motion he had prepared regarding vacate clauses. Following discussion and questions to staff, it was:

MOVED by Noah Quastel
SECONDED by Peter Harvie

WHEREAS:

1. Adequate and affordable housing is essential to one's sense of dignity, safety, inclusion and ability to contribute to the fabric of our neighbourhoods and societies;
2. Rental housing markets are in need of regulation to ensure that everyone has access to safe, adequate, affordable and secure housing;
3. A significant number of landlords in the City of Vancouver have adopted the practice of requiring tenants to sign fixed term leases with vacate clauses;
4. This practice allows landlords to circumvent Part 4 of the Residential Tenancy Regulation (B.C. Reg. 477/2003) which provides for limits to rent increases for tenants in line with changes to the cost of living;

5. Rent increases above changes to the cost of living threaten the right to affordable housing as well as security of tenure. The practice is harmful to renters, especially in tight rental markets, as they are forced to accept the rent increase or search for new accommodation, often at a distance from where they have built community and/or secured employment;
6. The Renters Advisory Committee addressed this issue in its report “Rental Recommendations 2015: Reforming the BC Residential Tenancy System”. In section 5.1, the committee advocated for amendments to the Residential Tenancy Act to prevent the contracting out of legislated rent control; and
7. Existing legislation is insufficient to protect renters from the abusive use of vacate clauses;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Vancouver Renters Advisory Committee recommends to the Minister Responsible for Housing, British Columbia:

- A. THAT the Residential Tenancy Act be amended to provide that where parties renew a fixed term tenancy agreement for the same property, rent increases are limited in the same manner as if the tenancy had continued uninterrupted.
- B. THAT the Residential Tenancy Act be amended to provide that a fixed term tenancy agreement automatically turns into a month-to-month tenancy at the end of the initial fixed term. Landlords can still use reasons to evict as currently provided in the Residential Tenancy Act.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the City of Vancouver Renters Advisory Committee recommends to Vancouver City Council that the City of Vancouver ensure that where fixed term tenancies are used in any residential properties it owns or manages, that where renters stay past the initial term, the agreement changes into a month-to-month tenancy subject to the rent control provisions in the Residential Tenancy Act and Residential Tenancy Regulation.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Next Meeting:

DATE: November 23, 2016
TIME: 5:30 pm
PLACE: Committee Room 1, Third Floor, City Hall

The Committee adjourned at 7:25 pm.

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