



RENTERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

July 19, 2017

A meeting of the Renters Advisory Committee was held on Wednesday, July 19, 2017, at 5:38 pm, in Committee Room 1, Third Floor, Vancouver City Hall.

PRESENT: Karen Sawatzky, Chair
Karen Ameyaw, Vice-Chair
Jaraad Marani
Annie Martin
Samrah Mian
Noah Quastel
Andrew Sakamoto
Maddison Spennath
Meseret Taye*
Andrea Winkler

ABSENT: Natasha Edgar (Leave of Absence)
Daniel Oleksiuk (Leave of Absence)
Peter Harvie

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Andrea Reimer, Council Liaison
Graham Anderson, Housing Policy

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE: Denise Swanston, Committee Clerk

* Denotes absence for a portion of the meeting.

Leave of Absence Requests

MOVED by Karen Sawatzky
SECONDED by Karen Ameyaw

THAT the Renters Advisory Committee approve Leaves of Absence for Natasha Edgar and Daniel Oleksiuk for today's meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY
(Meseret Taye absent for vote)

1. **Approval of Minutes**

MOVED by Samrah Mian
SECONDED by Jaraad Marani

THAT the minutes of the Renters Advisory Committee meeting held May 24, 2017, be approved.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY
(Meseret Taye absent for vote)

2. **Committee Response to Housing Re-set**

As the housing reset nears completion, the Chair put forth a motion for the Committee's consideration. After discussion it was,

MOVED by Karen Sawatzky
SECONDED by Samrah Mian

WHEREAS

1. The City of Vancouver has been engaged in a process of reviewing and renewing its housing strategy since September 2016;
2. The City of Vancouver's Renters Advisory Committee has previously provided feedback on that review process, including through a motion passed in November 2016;
3. The City of Vancouver provided an update on their housing strategy in a staff report, dated March 28, 2017, (the "March 2017 Staff Report"), and a discussion guide entitled "The Big Conversation - The Future of Housing in Vancouver", dated June 17, 2017, (the "Big Conversation Discussion Guide").

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Renters Advisory Committee submits the following as further commentary supplemental to the motion approved at the November 2016 meeting.

A. The Committee supports the following proposals:

1. Providing more City land to increase affordable housing;
2. Launching a one-year pilot program to prioritize affordable housing development and planning processes to speed the production of affordable housing;
3. Investigating and supporting new and innovative forms of housing such as tiny homes (or mobile homes), collective housing and co-housing;
4. Linking targets to local incomes and giving increased attention to affordability and suitability of the housing supply in relation to the needs of residents; and

5. Having a “robust public dialogue about our single-family neighbourhoods and how they could accommodate ideas for increased housing density and choice, and how and where existing character is maintained, evolves or transforms in the future.”

B. The Committee is concerned about the following:

1. The focus on arterials or near-arterials as locations for new purpose-built rental housing. This concern stems from the increased pollution hazards and noise levels that people living on arterials are exposed to. While the Committee agrees that transit hubs are important locations for new rental housing (in part so that lower income households have easy access to transit) the Committee also believes that non-arterial and non-corridor locations for new purpose-built rental housing are needed.
2. Language that does not encompass the diversity of renters. We agree that many young people (defined as 44 or under), and families with children who rent are stressed by their lack of affordable and suitable housing options in Vancouver, but believe renters in other age groups and household types are stressed as well. The Committee would like to see this reflected in the future City planning and communications on this topic because to do otherwise inadvertently sends the message that the City does not see those other groups (including but not limited to renting seniors and singles with low to moderate incomes) as struggling, or that their struggles are not considered a priority.
3. The City’s re-definition of “the missing middle” in the March 2017 Staff Report, which refers to age and/or income groups, is confusing. The term already has an established definition, which refers to building forms between single family detached homes and high-rises.
4. Lack of clarity around the use of terms such as “affordable” or “affordable housing” and whether those refer to home ownership or rental housing.

C. The Committee supports or reiterates its support for the following principles:

1. Small purpose-built apartment buildings should be allowed on every residential street in the city.
2. There should be more land in the city where purpose-built rental housing can be built without the need for rezoning.
3. Purpose-built rental housing that is protected by the City’s rate of change regulations and/or which is subject to housing agreements are more secure forms of long-term rental housing than secondary suites, rented condominiums and laneway houses. The City should therefore prioritize the creation of those forms of rental housing supply over less-secure forms.
4. The City should continue to explore taxation policies as tools in its housing strategy. The Committee specifically supports the exploration of

a luxury housing tax that would be used to fund the creation of public housing.

5. Until and unless the rental vacancy rate reaches and stays at a minimum of 3%, the City will need to continue proactively exploring all possible tools for resolving the rental housing shortage and the related homelessness crisis.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. Staff Update on SRO Enforcement and Task Force

Monika Czyz, Housing Policy and Projects, provided an update on the SRO enforcement and task force, and began by noting that the Housing section was been divided into two departments: Community Services, and Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability. Ms. Czyz and Tom Hamilton, Property Use Branch, responded to questions and comments from the Committee.

Topics discussed include:

- Balmoral Hotel
- Standards of Maintenance By-law
 - Enforcement/authority
 - Areas needing improvement/clarity in By-law
 - Liability issues
 - Structural issues vs. nonstructural issues
- BC Housing
- Tenant's (and landlord's) ability to access to information and related, upcoming pilot projects
- Illegal evictions
- Roles of non-profits and private owners

4. Council Liaison Updates

Councillor Reimer reminded the Committee of upcoming Canada 150+ events and encouraged everyone to attend the upcoming Drum is Calling Festival and the Walk for Reconciliation in September.

A review of Council meeting outcomes was discussed, and a preview of upcoming meetings; Mr. Anderson noted that next week's Council meetings will have heavy housing content on both Tuesday and Wednesday (July 25 and 26, 2017).

Council Minutes are available at:

<https://covapp.vancouver.ca/councilMeetingPublic/CouncilMeetings.aspx>

Councillor Reimer commented on the motion regarding the Housing Re-set passed by the Committee at this meeting, noting that with the increase in electric vehicles, pollution along arterials may begin to reduce, and suggested the Committee begin looking at ways to link health/green issues with housing.

5. Report from Vancouver City Planning Commission (VCPC) Roundtable

Andrea Winkler and Annie Martin attended the roundtable hosted by VCPC and noted there were commonalities amongst committees in concerns related to rental housing stock and affordability, as well as the desire for cross-collaboration and sharing of information amongst all committees.

6. Report from Advisory Chairs Meeting

The Chair and Vice-Chair summarized information presented at the July 10, 2017, Advisory Chairs meeting. Similar themes were noted at the Chairs meeting as at the VCPC roundtable; noting that almost all committees have housing subcommittees. An outcome from the meeting was that the VCPC Chair and RAC Chair and Vice-Chair would organize a meeting with all committees around housing (August 10). There is also a parking meeting taking place (potentially August 3, date to be confirmed).

The Chairs also noted that the Clerks Department is undertaking a review of Advisory Committees, including looking at ways to increase information sharing amongst committees.

Council of Councils meeting is taking place on October 12, 2017, and all advisory committee members are encouraged to attend.

7. New Business

The Committee discussed upcoming next steps for the State of Renters Report and the candidate questionnaire.

The Chair advised an additional working session has been added on August, 16, 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Karen Ameyaw
SECONDED by Andrea Winkler

THAT the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Next Regular Meeting:

DATE: September 13, 2017
TIME: 5:30 pm
PLACE: Committee Room 1
Third Floor, Vancouver City Hall

The Committee adjourned at 7:29 pm.

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