



RENTERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

July 31, 2024

A meeting of the Renters Advisory Committee was held on Wednesday, July 31, 2024, at 5:38 pm in the Cascadia Room, 3rd Floor, City Hall, and via electronic means.

PRESENT: Colleen Wickstrom, Chair
Kawa Ada
Heather Barclay
Eva Ciesielska
Margareta Dovgal
Nicolas Poppell, Co-Chair
Scott Robinson
James Tod

ALSO PRESENT: Trustee Jennifer Reddy, Vancouver School Board Liaison

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE: Alyse Stewart, Meeting Coordinator

WELCOME

The Chair acknowledged we are on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Peoples. We thank them for having cared for this land and look forward to working with them in partnership as we continue to build this great city together.

Approval of Minutes

MOVED by Scott Robinson
SECONDED by Nicolas Poppell

THAT the Renters Advisory Committee approve the Minutes from the meeting of Wednesday, May 22, 2024, as circulated.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

1. Broadway Plan Implementation

Due to staff availability, this item was not completed.

2. Motions

MOVED by Nicolas Poppell
SECONDED by Scott Robinson

WHEREAS

1. The rental vacancy rate serves as a critical indicator of housing market dynamics, influencing rental prices and the power balance between landlords and tenants, with low vacancy rates driving up rental costs and high vacancy rates leading to reduced rental costs.
2. The rental vacancy rate, analogous to the unemployment rate in labour markets, plays a pivotal role in determining housing affordability and market equilibrium, which emphasizes the need to establish a balanced vacancy rate to mitigate housing cost fluctuations and promote sustainable housing prices.
3. It is generally agreed that a balanced rental vacancy rate is 3%. Over the past 40 years Vancouver has experienced persistently low vacancy rates of between 0.4% and 1.2%, underscoring the challenge of affordability and accessibility, especially for low-income renters.
4. The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) reported that in October 2023, Vancouver's average vacancy rate was 0.9%, with some neighbourhoods experiencing vacancy rates as low as 0.4%. This is in comparison with the historically low national vacancy rate of 1.5% in October 2023, which is the lowest recorded rate since 1988.
5. The persistent lack of supply of attainable housing in Vancouver, particularly in purpose-built rental accommodations and secondary suites, has intensified the competition for rental housing, and highlights the need for proactive measures to increase the supply of rental housing units.
6. The City recently identified the Rental Market Vacancy Rate is an important outcome measure in the 10 Year Housing Targets (2024-2033), but also noted that the rental vacancy rate is not currently utilized in the calculations to indicate unmet housing needs that a rental vacancy adjustment is an indicator which is not accounted for in their calculation of unmet housing needs.
7. Establishing a rental vacancy target rate would enhance the ability of policymakers to monitor and address fluctuations in the rental market, allowing for timely interventions to stabilize rental costs, enhance affordability, and ensure housing security for Vancouver residents.
8. Setting a rental vacancy target rate encourages the implementation of tenant policies aimed at improving vacancy rates, including incentivizing the development of additional rental housing units, thereby bolstering the overall rental supply in Vancouver and addressing the critical need for affordable and accessible housing options for its residents.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Renters Advisory Committee recommends that the City of Vancouver adopt a rental vacancy target rate, and incorporate the target rate into the Housing Vancouver Strategy & the Housing Vancouver 10 Year Housing Targets. It is recommended that Council request a report from staff outlining a proposed

progressive rental vacancy target rate, as an additional tool to increase affordability and attainability of housing for renters in every neighbourhood.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

MOVED by Eva Ciesielska
SECONDED by James Tod

WHEREAS

1. Currently in BC some landlords discriminate against families based on the number of family members, denying them housing;
2. The National Occupancy Standards (NOS) have not been updated since the 1980s, and are not geared toward solving the current housing crisis;
3. To qualify for the Rental Assistance Program (RAP), families have to have a combined household income of no more than \$40,000 per year, and this amount has not changed for decades and does not match the current inflation level;
4. Guest speakers can provide valuable information on the history and implementation of NOS and RAP, data related to housing affordability, rental assistance programs and other subsidies. Their expertise can help the Renters Advisory Committee make informed recommendations and develop effective strategies to support renters in our community;
5. Engaging guest speakers allows the Renters Advisory Committee to establish connections with professionals, organizations, and community leaders who share our commitment to renters' rights. These connections can lead to collaborative efforts and partnerships that further our advocacy goals;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Co-Chairs of the Renters Advisory Committee (RAC) extend a formal invitation to the following representatives from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and BC Housing, to present at an upcoming RAC meeting (date TBD):

- Lance Jakubec, Policy Advisor, Client Solutions, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, on the National Occupancy Standards (NOS): history and background; if changes or adjustments to existing policy have been or are planned to be implemented; how the NOS affects the rental market in Vancouver; and challenges or barriers that renters are facing due to occupancy restrictions.
- Policy Team Representative, BC Housing, on the Rental Assistance Program (RAP): history and background; eligibility criteria; statistics on how many tenants are accessing RAP per year; any changes or adjustments to existing policy; possible upgrade of the income threshold considering current inflation and housing unaffordability crisis; other rent subsidy programs.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

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VARY AGENDA

*MOVED by Nicolas Poppell
SECONDED by Scott Robinson*

THAT the Renters Advisory Committee vary the agenda to hear Item 4, Liaison Updates, before the rest of the agenda items.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY
AND BY THE REQUIRED MAJORITY**

For clarity, the minutes are recorded in chronological order.

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4. Liaison Updates

The Vancouver School Board Liaison provided an overview of their role and opportunities for the Committee to work with them in the future.

3. Working Session Updates

The Chair provided an overview of the last working session held on June 19, 2024.

5. Subcommittee Updates

Subcommittee leads provided updates and responded to questions.

6. New Business

The Committee discussed draft motions for the upcoming meeting cycle. Additionally, the Committee received updates from the "[Healthy City Strategy](#)" joint engagement session held July 11, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

**MOVED by James Tod
SECONDED by Eva Ciesielska**

THAT this meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Next Meeting:

DATE: Wednesday, September 18, 2024
TIME: 5:30 pm
PLACE: Cascadia Room, 3rd Floor, City Hall
/ Webex Online

The Committee adjourned at 6:54 pm.

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