

**Minutes of
Rental Housing Advisory Committee (RHAC) Meeting**

**Wednesday, September 22, 2010
9:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Metro Hall, Room 310, Toronto**

<p>Core Members/Participants: Barbara Hurd, Kensington Bellwoods Community Mark Cormack, TCHC Tenant Coalition representative Elis Ziegler, EYET and RENT Thania Valle, EYET and RENT Bob Nykor, TCHC tenant Theresa Thorton, CERA Wendy Lum, FMTA Glenn Sheridan, Landlord's Self Help Centre John Bagnall, South Etobicoke Housing Help Centre</p>	<p>City Staff: Rosemary Foulds, SSHA Acting Co-Chair Alexandra Flynn, SSHA, Acting Co-Chair Gwynne Cheung, SSHA Rudi Czekalla, ML&S David Spence, City Planning Wilma D’Souza, SSHA</p> <p>Special guests: Mike Mulqueen, Toronto Environment Joseph Bonello, Green Saver</p>
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1. Welcome/Introductions

Rosemary Foulds welcomed all members and guests to the meeting and noted that she and Alex Flynn would co-chair this meeting as Katherine Chislett was unable to attend. A round of introductions followed.

2. Minutes of June 21, 2010 Meeting and Agenda Review

The minutes for June 21, 2010 were approved.

3. Toronto's Low Income Home Energy Initiatives

Mike Mulqueen gave a presentation on a pilot project being launched on home energy efficiency retrofit program for low-income households, partnered between Toronto Hydro, Enbridge and the City. This program hopes to reduce green house gas emissions, conserve energy and natural gas as well reduce participant's energy bill by \$300-500 per year. The target is to have 300 low-income homes retrofitted by the end of 2011.

To be eligible, units must be built prior to 1985 and homeowners must be of low income and paying their own gas bill and a customer of Enbridge. Greensaver will do an initial screening and assessment of eligible units, have owners sign an acknowledgment form and prepare a report on the process. The key to the success of this project is wide distribution of information materials about the project to generate sufficient interest. Tenants can also apply, with the agreement of the landlord.

Discussion Points

- Eligibility
 - In the pilot, only gas heating is eligible, but this will be reviewed if the program is expanded.
 - Assets are not considered when evaluating income of applicants.

- From the presentation it is not clear why ODSP recipients should be required to complete a second income assessment – the speakers will follow up.
- Outreach Strategies
 - Television could be quite effective in reaching seniors. At the pilot stage (300 households), there will be no television broadcast, because of concerns that the pilot will not be sufficient to respond to the demand. It is worth considering as part of a communication strategy if the project expands.
 - The City can help to target parts of the City to distribute flyers.
 - Flyers in electricity and gas bills were also suggested as a means of outreach.
- There is no firm launch date, but organizers are hoping to go “live” by the end of September.
- Contractors and Payments
 - Greensaver is pre qualifying contractors and will pay the contractors for the work.
 - Owners are not required to pay for the audit.
- Toronto Public Health pamphlets about air quality, paint, moulds and other health issues could be distributed as part of an information package.

4. Ontario Power Authority's (OPA) Proposed Low Income Energy Assistance Program

OPA and local distribution companies have introduced many initiatives. OPA is working on consolidating the offerings of all the programs. It particularly wants to reach low income households with its revised offerings. With its extensive knowledge of low income tenant households, the City has been involved in discussion about program design, pointing out programs that have good take up (e.g. Winter Warmth and Emergency energy Fund) as good practices.

Discussion Points:

- A program that is exclusively available to low income tenants may be a deterrent for private landlords in large multi-residential buildings, where some of the tenants would not qualify because their income is too high.
- Landlords in smaller buildings may not wish to participate because of the extra work involved with arranging third party access to units to complete repairs or upgrades.
- Both tenants and landlords should be eligible to apply.
- Education is essential to the success of the program.
- This program is planned to be rolled out in three phases, starting with conservation as the first phase. Solar power, which is not included in this phase, could be included later.

5. MRAB Audit & Enforcement Program Update

Rudi Czekalla of Municipal and Licensing Standards confirmed that the enforcement protocol is currently being developed, particularly communications with tenants.

The City's Protocol for Enforcement of Property Standards and Other By-laws in Residential Rental Apartment Buildings is posted on the City's Web Site in English.

http://app.toronto.ca/ApartmentStandards/docs/protocol_apt.pdf

Information about the complaint process in plain language is also posted in English

<http://www.toronto.ca/apartmentstandards/complaintprocess.htm>

Maintenance request forms are posted on the City's web site in 23 languages.

Where a work order affects an individual unit, the affected tenant is notified at the same time as the building owner. The tenant is also notified if the owner appeals the order to the Property Standards Committee or to the Superior Court of Justice. Work orders affecting common areas are to be posted in a location where all tenants have access. Common area work orders are sent to individual tenants upon request.

The survey of 4,000 buildings that started out in June has been completed and analysis of the results is underway. The purpose of the inspection was to identify high-priority buildings that will be subject to the audit and enforcement program beginning in 2011. The target date to complete the analysis is October 2010.

This year there have been 155 MRAB inspections to date. The Division expects to achieve its annual target for inspections this year.

Discussion points:

- Communication with Tenants
 - Written notices informing tenants of work orders are issued in English. Translation into other languages is being considered. Cost of translation is an issue.
 - Suggestion to identify the other languages spoken by property standards officers, and assign them to inspect in buildings where the language is spoken
 - RHAC members with concerns about consistent application of the protocol in the field are encouraged to follow up with Lance Cumberbatch, Director of Investigation Services (416 392-9352,) or Jim Hart, Executive Director (416 392-8445)
- R-inspection and appeals:
 - Re-inspections after a work order is expired are sometimes behind the 10-day target.
 - If a work order is appealed, follow up inspections will be put on hold.
 - Between 15% and 20% of work orders are appealed.
 - The Property Standards Committee has authority to split the appeal, allow the appeal for some parts of a work order and deny the appeal for other parts.
 - The Property Standards Officer can also separate issues in between work order.
- United Way High Rise Survey

Rudi met recently with the United Way Toronto (UWT) to discuss recommendations in an extensive survey completed by United Way with tenants living in high rise buildings in Toronto. As part of preparing the report, the UWT study team has been meeting with interested parties to discuss possible recommendations. City staff will ask United Way if they could come to the next RHAC meeting to discuss the report. Elis Ziegler and Barbara Hurd showed an interest to be involved in the discussion and their names would be passed on to the UWT study team.

6. Housing & Homelessness Supports & Initiatives Update

a) City's Response to Proposed Regulations of the Energy Consumer Protection Act

The City responded to the proposed regulations (letter was circulated to RHAC members). Alex is available to provide clarification about the City's response.

b) 2010 Automatic Rent Reduction Notification Program

On September 15, the City sent out rent reduction notices to 4,636 rental residential buildings, representing 128,100 tenants. These tenants will receive a notice for rent reduction in December. The number of properties is higher than in 2009, but the number of tenants is similar to the number in 2009, because most of the increase occurs in smaller residential properties. There may be changes to the numbers of buildings and tenants eligible for automatic rent reductions in December, because taxes may change as a result of tax appeal decisions received after the landlord notices have been sent out but before the tenant notices are prepared.

c) 2010 Brochure on Services for Tenants and Landlords

Phone numbers have been updated in the 2010 brochure, which was distributed to agencies. Copies were circulated at the meeting.

d) RHAC Presentation to RENT

Katherine, Gwynne and Rosemary attended the RHAC presentation at the Landlord Connect lunch. About 70 people attended. Question and discussion focussed on the housing accessibility for people with disabilities and housing services to people of aboriginal origin.

7. Members' Updates

a) City Planning

The City's new zoning by-law was approved by Council in August, 2010. Zoning maps will be available on line shortly. The zoning by-law prohibits charging for visitor parking in residential zones and residential apartment zones. Charges for parking are allowed in Commercial Residential zones. Visitor parking charges had been a cost issue for community agencies providing service in the community (e.g. home care, meals on wheels).

The deadline for appeals is September 30, 2010. Appeals can apply to specific clauses, regulations, or more general issues. Klaus Lehmann is the contact for questions about the appeals (416 392-0175).

b) Tower Renewal Project

Tower renewal will be holding consultations later in the fall. RHAC members are asked to encourage other stakeholders to attend.

8. Next Meeting: The next RHAC meeting will be held on December 13, 2010 from 9:30 to Noon, at Metro Hall, Room 303.