



Hamilton

MINUTES: Tenant Advisory Committee
June 10, 2011 – 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Room CH433, City Hall

PRESENT: John Hawker (Chair); Meaghan Ross, Andy Cranbury, Larry Husack, Connie Bellamy, Laura Ryan

Also Present: Jennie Vengris – City of Hamilton

1. OPENING & AGENDA APPROVAL

1.1 – Welcome

John welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The members introduced themselves for the benefit of the two new members, Laura and Larry.

1.2 – Additions to & Approval of Agenda

Jennie will revise the TAC Terms of Reference for the next meeting

Peter Hutton will be a guest from Solutions for Housing Action Committee

Andy suggested the group needed to formalize the reappointment of the Chair – see item 2.4

1.3 - DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

2. BUSINESS ARISING/UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2.1 - APPROVAL OF MINUTES for November 12, 2010 and December 20, 2010

(Cranbury/Bellamy)

CARRIED

2.2 Business Arising from minutes

None

2.3 Strengths and Gaps Survey

- Jennie handed out a survey to all members to complete within the meeting time.
- The survey asks questions about the strengths/skills and gaps within the Tenant Advisory Committee. The idea is that it will help us reach out to agency representatives to support our work in areas where we may have

gaps. It is also an opportunity to better understand the strengths and skills around the table in order to put them to good use.

- Jennie will report back the findings at the next meeting.

2.4 TAC Chair

- Andy forwarded a nomination of John Hawker to retain his Chair position for the Tenant Advisory Committee and John accepted the nomination.

(Cranbury/Bellamy)

CARRIED

2.5 Work Plan Exercise

- Jennie facilitated a conversation to develop the Tenant Advisory Committee work plan for 2011.
- First, the group reviewed the TAC mandate and a snapshot of the other key players (groups and committees) who are working on rental housing related work.
- Next, the group looked at a list of brainstormed activities that had emerged over the past year (through discussion and activities that were not completed in 2010) and identified if the activity fit within the TAC mandate or within another group:

Professional Security in Rental Buildings for Emergencies

- Falls within the different departments that deal with emergencies like Public Health and Property Standards – they can mandate housing providers/landlords to abide by security policies and procedures.

Renter Voter Turnout

- While a municipal election is not on the immediate horizon, the accessibility of polls is something that we need to consider for elections for all levels of government and the municipality has jurisdiction over this.
- Laura shared that the Hamilton Civic League is looking at voter turnout as an issue and perhaps we can work with them.
- TAC will work on this in partnership with the Hamilton Civic League (may be possible partnership opportunities as well with SHAC and the Common Campaign Coalition).

Licensing Rooming Houses

- The Housing Help Centre (staff Anna) has been working on this issue over the past year – the initial work was to inventory all of the rooming houses in Hamilton (with the exception of student housing).
- Anna found approximately 300 rooming houses, of which only about 10% are licensed.
- The concern is that while licensing is critical for the safety and security of tenants, the cost and process may be prohibitive for some providers which may result in a loss of this low-cost housing option in Hamilton.

- The Housing Help Centre now has Andrew Loucks working with rooming house tenants to ensure their rights and responsibilities are understood and followed.
- The Housing Help Centre website has a lot of good information on rooming houses.
- There may be a role for TAC in this work in partnership with the Housing Help Centre.

Multi-Residential Tax Advocacy

- While this is an important issue (tenants are paying 3x more than a homeowner for the same assessed property), it does not fall within the work plan of TAC at this time.

Monitoring and Making Sure New Rental Targets are Met

- The Official Plan says Hamilton needs 629 new units of purpose built rental per year.
- After accounting for the 730 built through the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program, we are still considerably behind and we need creative solutions.
- This is something that TAC will work on in partnership with the Affordable Housing Flagship and the Housing and Homelessness Planning Group.

Utilities Awareness

- This was raised by a previous TAC member (Mary) and was mainly due to the concern around payments being due in advance of government benefits distribution.
- This falls more within auspices of SHAC and Housing Help Centre.

Environmental Scan of Community Resources

- The Housing Help Centre and Meaghan's program in particular have a number of comprehensive and accessible resources for tenants.
- Additionally, the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan work will endeavour to inventory housing resources.
- This is not part of the TAC work plan.

Staff Education/Educating Property Managers

- Effort Trust was leading a process by which landlords would self-certify. Some concerns were raised about the motivation and the potential impact on tenants.
- Additionally, the City of Hamilton was piloting a voluntary landlord registry through Building Standards.
- The TAC would like to follow up on that pilot as part of the 2011 work plan.

Advocacy and Action on Bed Bugs

- This falls within the mandate of the Bed Bug Action Group. They are working on education and awareness and supporting treatment

preparation. This work is funded by the Province and is being run through the Housing Help Centre.

- This activity does not fit within the 2011 work plan for TAC but Meaghan will keep us up to date.

Tenant Access to City Hall

- The group talked about the City Housing Hamilton Tenant Engagement process underway – is there a role for TAC in that work?
- Want to look at how follow up is dealt with for tenants who are accessing Public Health or Property Standards.
- Laura is working with the Accountability and Transparency committee – there may be some possibility for a connection.
- This activity will be a part of the TAC 2011 work plan.

- Jennie will pull together some background information on our work plan items and we will develop implementation strategies (who will lead, when, with what resources) at our next meeting:
 - Rental Voter Turnout (with Hamilton Civic League)
 - Licensing Rooming Houses (with Housing Help Centre)
 - Landlord Registry Pilot Follow Up
 - Tenants Access to City Hall (with Accountability and Transparency)
 - Monitoring New Rental Housing Stock Targets (with Affordable Housing Flagship and Housing and Homelessness Planning Group)

4. NEW BUSINESS

4.1 Guest – Peter Hutton from the Solutions for Housing Action Committee

- The Solutions for Housing Action Committee (SHAC) is an activist group that has been working on housing issues since the early 1990's.
- The Tenant Advisory Committee was actually formed from a recommendation from SHAC.
- Recognizing that new City Council members may be interested in learning about housing issues, SHAC is proposing to partner with TAC and arrange informal discussions with the following Council members: Jason Farr, Judy Partridge, Brenda Johnson, Rob Pasuta, Lloyd Ferguson and Scott Duvall.
- SHAC and TAC would use a questionnaire that the Common Campaign Coalition put together for municipal candidates as a starting point for the conversation
- Please let John know if you are interested in taking part in those conversations and John and Peter will proceed with scheduling.

5. ADJOURNMENT

On motion, the meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

(Husack/Bellamy)

CARRIED