

Housing Working Group Meeting Notes

January 17th, 2023

Virtual WebEx Meeting

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Those in Attendance: Lance Dingman, Jayne Cardno, James Kemp, Tom Manzuk, Paula Kilburn

Also in Attendance: Lina Khalil

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Approval of January 17th Agenda:** Agenda was approved with the addition of Rising Star to other business.
- 3. Approval of HWG's October Meeting Notes:** Meeting notes were approved.
- 4. Approval of HWG's November Meeting Notes:** Meeting notes were approved.
- 5. CityHousing Recommendation Report**
Discussion: Before we began, Jayne wanted to point out that the CityHousing Board has been expanded and now contains 14 Councillors. She

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suggested that we draft a letter about our concerns and direct it to the Board as a corporate entity. She suggested that we could avoid this review and just draft the letter. The Chair responded that it was a good idea to draft a letter and we will probably do just that, but there is no reason not to finish the review as we have already put a lot of work into it and it doesn't make sense to put all our eggs in one basket.

- a. **Employers over 50 people are required to be level AA Compliant and AA Web Accessible Compliant as of the beginning of 2021:** We discussed the problem the City is having with this issue, especially since the website migration. Despite their best efforts, there are problems on the websites and reportedly, there is still problems filling out online forms. CityHousing should perform their own review of the system periodically in order to ensure it is accessible.
- b. **New Picnic Tables, Benches and Other Seating Must Be Installed On Level, Hard Surfaces and Connected to Accessible Pathways:** We started to discuss how there is no complaint process regarding accessibility issues on the CityHousing properties. Chair suggested that having the

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property manager as the person to complain to is not fair or effective; that people will be too afraid of being labeled a problem tenant to raise important issues and ask for accommodation. Tom suggested that we recommend something like an ombudsman to deal with these issues. This led Jayne to question if this is in HWG's mandate or even AODA related. Paula replied that it is related, but we do not have to restrict ourselves to the AODA, that our mandate refers to accessibility issues for person with disabilities and this is well in our purview. Jayne raised concerns that it would be perceived as an overreach to the new Council and wanted to have a positive relationship with the new Councillors. Chair responded that we aren't trying to be confrontational, only recommending what we perceive as the best way to improve accessibility for all. Chair also agreed with Tom about the ombudsman and went further to say there needs to be someone to raise other issues like modifications in the home.

- c. **Playgrounds Need to Be Fully Accessible and Those With Disabilities Should Be Consulted Before Construction:** This was a similar issue as above, that a separate person or department in CityHousing should be responsible to oversee

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these kinds of constructions as well as provide a complaint avenue. Paula suggested we reach out to Megan or Cynthia from the Parks Department as these playgrounds are owned by the City. Chair pointed out that they are owned by an arms length corporation of the City and the Parks Department has no jurisdiction there.

- d. **Required to Follow IASR Guidelines Regarding Accessible Parking Spaces:** We will have to return to this due to CityHousing trying to unify the parking policies across all buildings. Currently they are all different.
- e. **If Service Counters are Offered at Least One of Them Needs to Be Fully Accessible:** While Amanda explained that the service counter on the third floor is in compliance with minimum AODA guidelines, she had to agree that there could be improvements made like contrasting markings or tactile strips or signage using pictograms. An in-house accessibility department can make sure that CityHousing is not only in compliance, but is trying to be as inclusive as possible.
- f. **At least 3% of Seating Needs to Be Able to Fully Accommodate All Mobility Devices:** We

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discussed how Amanda explained that all common areas would be accessible by 2027. This led to a discussion on what a common area was and how they differ from building to building. We also discussed how an in-house accessibility department could help unify policy over all buildings. This led to a discussion on problem buildings and how they have been completely locked down. Jayne raised several issues with Vanier Towers. She also cited recent accessibility improvements at 500 MacNab and suggested that the corporate communication also include congratulations on this issue.

- g. Housing Providers are Required to Have Maintenance Plans in Place to Ensure That the AODA is Being Adhered to Despite the Disruptions:** Chair began this discussion by giving a little background on contractor experiences as a CityHousing tenant citing in particular, the complete replacement of all windows in the building. The contractor was destructive to property, blocked accessibility paths for weeks, took no extra steps to ensure safe work inside apartments, took over both elevators and when a complaint was made, the project manager sent the contractor to the persons door to address their concerns. This experience

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was recreated at all buildings across the city according to other tenants from other buildings. Other major work across all buildings include, Lighting, Heating and Toilets. No accessibility consultation or accommodations were offered. Paula pointed out that people using social housing don't seem to be given any choices with these major upheavals. Lance suggested a complaint process again for this. Jayne pointed out that Councillor Wilson has raised the issue about no complaint process in CityHousing and again suggested a letter to the corporation.

- h. Accessibility, Sensitivity and Accommodation Training Must be Provided to All Employees, Contractors and Volunteers:** Chair started by saying this issue is very similar to the last. The requirement of AODA training is in no way sufficient to address accommodation and sensitivity needs that arise. Jayne asked if we could request the required training provided. Lance suggested using some sort of peer support for this if funding could be found.
- i. Housing Providers Must Place Notice and Bulletin Boards at Accessible Levels:** Chair began by saying that in his experience, no

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CityHousing buildings have bulletin boards at accessible heights and also recognized that it won't help those with vision loss no matter the height. Paula pointed out that Mary had been trying to address this issue as well as providing various languages. Jayne said she remembered that there was a staff member working on the multilingual issue, but can't say if it went anywhere.

j. Leaving Notices of Entry on Doors is Not Enough With Disabled Tenants. They May Not Leave Very Often and Wouldn't See the Notice With Enough Time. More Effort is Required:

Chair began by reminding everyone of the example previously mentioned about his shut in neighbour and how they would have to force her out and that Amanda's response was that is something the individual should be discussing with the property manager. Tom pointed out that there is a list that property managers have access to that is used in evacuation purposes and this could help here.

Chair agreed, but pointed out the current list is very basic and only includes enough information to get people safely evacuated. Chair also suggested that this would also be a good spot for an accessibility department to serve as a middleman and ensure compliance.

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- k. **Toxic Chemicals Can Trigger Multiple Chemical Sensitivities(MCS). The Least Toxic Chemical Should Be Used When Required:** We began by discussing chemicals like cleaning solutions, construction solvents and paints and a consistent policy around avoiding their use around people with known chemical sensitivities. Then we discussed cigarette smoke blowing through windows and ashtrays catching fire and the toxic fumes blowing inside. Also briefly discussed the differences between marijuana and tobacco use and how experiences are different from building to building. This would again suggest an accessibility advocate/complaint process is required and a standardized policy. Lance asked if surveying the tenants would be helpful.

- l. **Seven Day Cleaning Notices May Not Be Enough Time in Cases of Hoarding. More Time May Be Required:** The City doesn't issue seven day cleaning notices as far as we know. Now the AODA suggests that a seven day notice is required. But as Tom pointed out at a previous meeting, the tenancies act says 24 hours is required. We need to look into this more and determine exactly what part of the AODA this came from and if it only applies to cleaning. We will need to learn which one

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would take precedence. Chair has agreed to revisit after some research.

- m. Accommodations Need to be Made When Showing New Units to Prospective Tenants:** Amanda explained, if the person makes their accommodation needs known, CityHousing is willing to provide it. An accessibility department would be able to draft a more concrete policy that adapts to most needs.
- n. An AODA Compliance Review is Required Every Three Years. Online Compliance Must be Reviewed as Well:** We know that CityHousing does not review its online accessibility compliance, but recommend that they do so. Amanda reported that they provide an annual AODA compliance report to Jessica Bowen. I will request the report from Jessica.
- o. Housing Providers Are Required to Make Accommodations Up to the Point of Undue Hardship.** Chair began with explaining why this one was so important. That people need to be accommodated in their living arrangements and these needs change over time as people's conditions change. That an accessibility advocate

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would be beneficial here so that people would be free to give accurate requests for their needs. Housing stability is too precarious for some to speak directly with the PM as Amanda suggested. We are realizing that aging in the home is better than relocating due to increased needs.

- p. **Self-Serve Kiosks are Required to be Fully Accessible and Can Accommodate Those With Vision Loss.** Chair explained that this was another big issue that we can address and that Amanda was eager for our assistance in this matter. Of biggest note are laundry rooms. They need various different accommodations and each building is going to have different needs depending on the resident makeup. For example, making machines accessible to those with vision loss or making instructions understandable with pictograms to name two. Paula reminded us that they went to Stonechurch once for a tour and they went through the laundry room and she pointed out all the accessibility issues she had. Tom added that a follow up visit was made a year later and no improvements were made in that time. We will recommend that we work with them to improve conditions and education in each building as there is no size fits all.

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Paula was asked to try using the CityHousing website to test its accessibility. Paula reported that the website has not completed its migration, but she had great difficulty navigating what was there. She tried to fill out an application and it wasn't accessible by screen reader. More work is recommended here as it isn't considered functional. She will retry again in a month and report again.

6. **Affordable/Deeply Affordable/Attainable**

Housing Discussion: Chair began by giving everyone a brief overview that SPWG had tasked the HWG to address stagnant social assistance rates and issues arising from living in deep poverty. As rent is now taking up the majority of living expenses at the present time, Chair is trying to create a motion asking Council to replace affordable housing with attainable housing within the provincial framework and asked the group for ideas or advice on how to finish it. Jayne and Tom pointed out that there is no concrete definition for affordable housing at various political levels. Chair added that he lifted the definition for affordable housing from a provincial website. Tom added that a concrete definition is required to really address the housing crisis. Jayne mentioned the change upcoming to ODSP for those that are working to

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keep one thousand dollars of their earnings before claw backs. Chair pointed out that this will only affect the small percentage of people on ODSP that are able to work. Jayne reminded the group that the Ford policy on this matter is the best way for the disabled to improve their conditions is to work. We didn't decide on anything and will discuss this again next month.

- 7. Other Business:** Chair mentioned that the support letter for the HATS program will be going to E&CS that week and that he will be delegating about the program.

Lance discussed the Rising Star Project and mentioned that this has funding to do a small study on the current needs assessment on co-ops and asked for assistance to steer the project.

- 8. Adjournment.**

Partial Draft under Discussion:

Whereas, the ACPD's HWG has a mandate to advise Council on the removal of barriers to persons with disabilities and the prevention of new barriers.

Furthermore, we are to highlight deficiencies in accessible

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housing and anticipate accessible housing needs in the future. In alignment with the HWG's Work Plan we have identified a significant barrier to accessible housing for persons with disabilities.

Whereas, the definition of "affordable housing" has been set by the province at eighty percent of market rent; current market rent for a one bedroom is approximately \$1600 per month so that sets the current "Affordable Rent" at \$1280.

Whereas, the commodification of our housing system will ensure that market rental rates will continue to climb becoming a serious problem because "Affordable Rent" is now an unfixed variable and people on fixed incomes or those that work for minimum wage cannot afford an apartment even if they spend nothing on food.

Whereas, the definition of "Attainable Housing" is rent that is attainable to people currently below the poverty line. This includes minimum wage earners and those on fixed incomes like ODSP and CPP. This is currently approximately \$750-\$800. While this is also an unfixed variable, it fluctuates in very small increments that is tied directly to minimum wage and entitlement increases.