



Hamilton

MINUTES: Tenant Advisory Committee
Friday, November 12, 2010 – 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Room CH433, City Hall

PRESENT: John Hawker (Chair); Mary Sinclair, Connie Bellamy, Susan Andrews, Andy Cranbury

REGRETS: Meaghan Ross – Housing Help Centre

GUESTS: Steve Walsh – City of Hamilton, David Brodati – City of Hamilton

Also Present: Jennie Vengris – City of Hamilton, Larry Huibers – Housing Help Centre

1. OPENING & AGENDA APPROVAL

1.1 – Welcome

John welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2 – Additions to & Approval of Agenda

Agenda was accepted.

(Bellamy/Sinclair) CARRIED

1.3 - DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

2. BUSINESS ARISING/UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2.1 - APPROVAL OF MINUTES for June 11, 2010

Andy Cranbury asked a question about the minutes – ‘how was the living wage defined?’. John explained that the groups took a range of factors (housing, food, necessities, etc.) to calculate what a living wage would be. The Tenant Advisory Committee (TAC) minutes of October 8, 2010 were approved with that amendment.

(Sinclair/Bellamy) CARRIED

2.2 Business Arising from minutes

None

2.3 Bed Bugs and Public Health – Steve Walsh

- Steve Walsh is a Public Health Inspector in Public Health Services, Health Hazards, Health Protection.
- Bed bugs is not a new issue – it has a long history but increased global mobility, more careful pesticide use and urban overcrowding have increased the incidents of bed bugs.
- Bed bugs will not transmit any diseases – this is part of the reason why its hard to get the issue on the health radar. However, major scratching can breach skin which can introduce bacteria and infection.
- Bed bugs are visible to people with good eyesight – they are small (about the size of an apple seed and flat) and they prefer to live in tight spaces
- Bed bugs are not like lice – they do not live on people (unless the infestation is very significant)
- It can intensify mental health issues because of isolation and stigmatization
- Larry made the point that ‘people don’t have bed bugs, facilities do’
- Mary relayed a situation in which a woman was refused home care because of bed bugs – Steve shared that Public Health is speaking with service providers to raise awareness and increase education – people are encouraged to call Public Health in a situation like this
- It is very difficult to know who ‘brought bed bugs in’ to a housing situation – it would be almost impossible to prove and the lack of cleanliness contributing to bed bugs is a myth. Bed bugs are attracted to warmth and carbon dioxide.
- Bed bugs breed all year long and adult bugs can live for 6 months without a blood meal. Eggs hatch in 6-14 days.
- Treatment requires to pesticide applications within 50 days
- Public Health is in the process of defining best practices around treatment
- John asked what Public Health in Toronto is doing about bed bugs? Not sure.
- People will know if they have bed bugs if they have groupings of 3 bites on exposed skin (often where the skin meets the bed) – it will look like a mosquito bite but without the red dot in the centre.
- It is difficult for Public Health to accurately comment on the number of incidents – oftentimes people who are homeowners will go to the private market to deal with bed bugs. Tenants and landlords will access Public Health – for this reason, the incidents that Public Health could comment on or map would be skewed which could further stigmatize this as a poverty-based issue.
- Landlords have a legal responsibility within the Landlord Tenant Act in and the City of Hamilton Bylaw 10-221 to deal with pest control (including bed bugs).
- Tenants also have a responsibility – to make sure the apartment is appropriately prepared for treatment.
- In terms of a policy response to bed bugs – in 2007, Public Health noticed an increased number of calls related to bed bugs. In 2008, they partnered with Good Shepherd Works (who provide bed bug management) to run an

educational symposium for landlords. In 2009, education continued, however the emergence of H1N1 flu impacted the capacity.

- Now, Public Health will come and do educational presentations to landlords and tenants if the space is provided. They are also looking to put together consistent information for the community. It is most useful if tenants and landlords can learn together.
- There was a question about the impact of climate change on the increase in bed bugs. Not sure if it's an issue but there might be some academic work on this.
- Suggestions were made to Steve to reach out to the nursing home/hospital community and also the moving sector.
- There is a Bed Bug Collaborative – their next meeting is December 7th.
- Connie raised the concern that Social Housing Providers have a fixed (and relatively low) budget for maintenance – how does bed bug treatment fit into that budget?
- The core health concerns that bed bugs raise include – increased mental health issues, secondary infections and exposure to pesticides.
- TAC is interested in putting a resolution to City Council around bed bugs. Larry and Jennie offered to draft something for TAC.

5. Condominium Conversions Presentation – David Brodati

- Dave suggested that since the meeting was over time at that point, that perhaps the Tenant Advisory Committee could join with the Solutions for Housing Action Committee to hear the presentation and discuss this issue.

6. Adjournment

On motion, the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

(Bellamy)

CARRIED