

ST. JOHN'S

Affordable Housing Working Group Minutes

February 25, 2020

11:30 a.m.

Conference Room A, 4th Floor City Hall

Present: Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary, Council Representative
Jill Snow, CMHC
Gail Thornhill, Stella's Circle
Ayon Shahed, Choices for Youth
Doug Pawson, End Homelessness St. John's
Grayson Kelly, NLHC
Andrew Harvey, First Light

Regrets: Emily Timmins, Poverty Reduction, Gov NL

Staff: Simone Lilly, Affordable Housing & Development Facilitator,
Chair
Judy Tobin, Manager of Non-Profit Housing
Shanna Fitzgerald, Legislative Assistant

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

2.1 Adoption of Agenda

Moved By Andrew Harvey

Seconded By Gail Thornhill

That the agenda be adopted as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

3. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

3.1 Adoption of Minutes - January 8, 2020

Moved By Andrew Harvey

Seconded By Sheilagh O'Leary

That the minutes of January 8, 2020 be adopted as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

4. BUSINESS ARISING

4.1 Affordable Housing Strategy Update

The Chair provided an update on the City of St. John's Affordable Housing Strategy 2019-2028 and main areas of work.

Growing Capacity

Affordable housing was pleased to partner with Choices for Youth to welcome two National colleagues to St. John's; Dominika Krzeminska the Director of Strategic Initiatives with CHRA and Stéphan Corriveau, the Executive Director of the newly formed Community Housing Transformation Centre.

The week's agenda included:

- Individual meetings with community housing providers/ support organizations
- Meetings with City of St. John's and NLHC government officials to discuss regional strategic directions and opportunities for collaboration
- 'Growing Capacity in Community Housing' public forum. This event sought to raise awareness on the two organizations, their programs and capacities. It allowed attendees to engage with these National Organizations and discuss our together discuss our local context within their National mandates and strategic priorities.
- Choices for Youth and Happy City co-hosted a panel discussion on Affordability in St. John's. Dominika took part in this event as the panelist on housing affordability.

Following discussion, the below was noted:

- Ayon Shahed invited the Panel to have further conversation with CHRA and CHTC.

- There is a need to speak further about urban indigenous issues.
- First Light is planning an event for September and there will be a relevant FCM Conference in the Fall.
- The Urban Indigenous Coalition is developing the terms of reference and are getting ready to set up working groups with four priority areas, one of which is specific to housing and homelessness. Updates will be brought to a future meeting.

Successful Tenancies

The Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Tenant document developed by the City and our affordable housing partners, has been updated to reflect the Residential Tenancies Act changes that came into effect in 2019. The document has recently been translated into French and Arabic and has been uploaded to the City of St. John's website City of St. John's> publications> housing.

Housing Catalyst Fund

A Housing Catalyst Grant selection committee was established to review submissions. It included the CMHC Affordable Housing Specialist, NLHC Manager of Affordable Housing programs and the following internal staff: Chief Municipal Planner, Supervisor– Tourism & Events, Manager- Housing and the Affordable Housing and Development Facilitator. Due to remaining funds from 2019, the selection committee was able to recommend seven applications for funding, 5 at \$10,000 and an additional 2 at \$5,000 each. Recommendations were approved by Committee of the Whole on February 12th and adopted at the Regular Council Meeting on February 24, 2020. The Housing Catalyst Fund release was posted February 24, 2020.

Property Standards

Affordable Housing continue to reach out to Eastern Health to see if they would be interested in the 'Safe and Healthy Housing' Presentation. The next scheduled presentation will be held for Stella's Circle staff on March 5th.

Land

Habitat for Humanity will be applying for rezoning on the City owned Eric Street parcel of land. Internal consultations continue to be held to investigate any concerns raised with the proposed development to date.

Habitat for Humanity are preparing a potential design and until this design is submitted to the Planning Department, community concerns can't fully be investigated as they relate to the project (ex. impact on trees or traffic flow). In the interim, there was an engagement meeting with the West End Community Alliance to outline concerns and ensure that the project process and current phase are understood. This was an informal meeting outside of the formal public consultations that are part of the rezoning process. A summary will be sent to Deputy Mayor O'Leary.

Once the potential design has been submitted, an engagement meeting will be held with the community gardeners and Habitat for Humanity to discuss possibilities for revitalization of the garden.

An engage page has been set up that outlines the project background, FAQs and the project lifecycle <https://www.engagestjohns.ca/eric-street>

It was noted that there will be a full debrief of this project.

NIMBY

The Affordable Housing Working Group determined there was value in updating the NIMBY toolkit to include new case studies, an updated contact list and revised CSJ Planning Process. The update is now complete. The new revised document has been uploaded on the Canadian Home Builders of Newfoundland and Labrador website and is linked on the City of St. John's Website under publications> housing. A workshop and relaunch event are being planned for May 2020.

Social Marketing Strategy

A social marketing campaign has been created to tackle the fears associated with affordable housing through increased information (awareness campaigns, success stories, etc.) and focusing on the benefits of affordable housing. Three videos are complete and a revitalized website to accompany these videos is now being created. The goal is to launch this social marketing strategy in tandem with the NIMBY workshop. The Chair will send the link to members.

Grayson Kelly joined the meeting at 11:53 am.

4.2 Opportunities for Collaboration with Community Housing Transformation Centre

The Chair informed the Committee of opportunities for collaboration with CHTC.

The Community Housing Transformation Centre (CHTC) works with housing organizations across Canada to bring together expertise, resources and promising practices from across the sector in one place. Their goal is drive transformation, sustainability and growth in community housing. While Stephan Corriveau, Executive Director of CHTC was in St. John's in February two potential opportunities for collaboration were discussed that the AHWG would like to consider:

1. Potential partnership with Housing Catalyst grants. Partnering with CHTC on these grants would potentially offer more grants or grants at a higher value (attracting a wider range of projects). Consideration can be made for entering a Memorandum of Understanding, stating matched funding at a 1\$ for 1\$ ratio for every project that is selected, based on an agreed selection criteria and report process.

CHTC is unable to fund the City of St-John's so one of the following options may be possible:

- Affordable Housing and CHTC both send shares of the grants directly to the recipients, and they answer back to both funders.
- Affordable Housing sends CHTC money, and they send the total amount to the recipient, they report back to Affordable Housing. Reports would be shared, and no admin fees would be charged to the City.

After discussion it was agreed that the second option: a partnership where Affordable Housing sends CHTC money, and they send the total amount to the recipient, they report back to Affordable Housing. Reports would be shared, and no admin fees would be charged to the City is the ideal option.

2. Potential partnership to create a community housing resource person

It is well recognized in the community that National funding opportunities exist but locally there is difficulty accessing that funding due to:

- Lack of knowledge about existing opportunities
- Capacity to prepare applications
- A lack of technical expertise
- Expertise to guide decisions of housing renewal and management

The Committee discussed how the gap could be filled for St. John's by creating a community position that could provide consulting, technical support, planning and funding guidance in support of strengthening the sustainability of the community housing sector.

The following was noted:

- The application would be made for a short-term community position funded by CHTC.
- There is a sector wide need for this type of position.
- This position could be a contract position housed by the City but available for all community agencies.
- Focus will begin with the City of St. John's with opportunity to grow to include other municipalities.
- Ayon Shahed to send contacts to Simone Lilly for possible connections for this project (New Brunswick Non Profit Association and Manitoba Non Profit).

A temporary subgroup was formed to work on this application including Simone Lilly, Grayson Kelly, and Gail Thornhill. Jill Snow will provide information to the Chair about key notes from past forums outlining the gaps in need to support the application. Grayson Kelly to investigate the provincial sustainability of funds. An update will be brought back to the Panel on this application.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Workshop Series

A Workshop Series update was provided by the Chair.

- The Planning Workshop date will be confirmed by the Chair at a later date.
- The second NIMBY Workshop will be scheduled in May. The board of Canadian Home Builders will be approached for input as Victoria Belbin will no longer be serving in her position. Jill Snow will take the lead on a presenter for this workshop with follow up to come back to the committee.

5.2 Emergency Shelters - follow-up

The Chair referred the Panel to the discussion at the last AHWG meeting. Council requested that there be a discussion with members of the Affordable Housing Working Group around what the City's interaction with emergency shelters is and what it could or should be. The working group discussed advocacy efforts. It was determined that while End Homelessness St. John's continues to lead the discussions on the state of emergency shelters, as the system planning organization for St. John's, the AHWG saw value in providing advocacy points with recommendations to support Council.

The draft reference document was prepared and circulated to the members for review prior to the meeting. The committee will provide any comments by Friday February 28, 2020.

5.3 Verbal Update - Office of the City Clerk

The Committee was informed that meetings will be scheduled in advance for continuity with the requirements of other Committees.

5.4 Affordable Housing Vacancies in Low Income Units

Deputy Mayor O'Leary gave an update to the Committee. After announcing last week that 19 percent of affordable housing units were vacant, the City of St. John's received more than 100 applications and inquires. The announcement helped to educate and debunk myths around accessible housing and the timing after Snowmageddon was ideal due to the struggle of people after loss of income for the week of the state of emergency.

6. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next two meetings have been scheduled for April 9, 2020 and June 11, 2020.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:55 pm.

CHAIRPERSON, SIMONE LILLY