

# ST. JOHN'S

## Affordable Housing Working Group Minutes

January 8, 2020

12:00 p.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  
Emily Timmins, Poverty Reduction, Gov NL  
Andrew Harvey, First Light

Regrets: Victoria Belbin, Canadian Homebuilders Association

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** Gail Thornhill

**Seconded By** Ayon Shahed

That the Agenda be adopted with an addition from Ayon Shahed.

**MOTION CARRIED**

3. **ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES**

3.1 **Adoption of the Minutes - September 24, 2019**

**Moved By** Andrew Harvey

**Seconded By** Jill Snow

That the minutes of September 24, 2019 be adopted as presented.

**MOTION CARRIED**

#### **4. BUSINESS ARISING**

##### **4.1 Affordable Housing Strategy Update**

The Chair updated the Committee on the following ongoing initiatives for 2019-2028 and the following was noted:

- Housing Week

National Housing Day is meant to raise awareness about housing and homelessness and encourage events designed to focus on the needs of individual communities. This year, a film screening, a housing forum, a community art project and a housing 'coffee break' were held. Activities and events were well attended and reached a broad range of stakeholders and community members. It was noted that the housing week was a success with some positive follow up engagement. It was noted that next year a subcommittee would be beneficial.

- Annual Update

An annual update on the Affordable Housing Strategy's first year and main areas of work was published on the City's website. The Chair can provide a copy if requested.

- Workshop Series

Affordable Housing are preparing to launch an affordable housing workshop series for 2020. This workshop series would essentially give attendees a 101 guide on key topics and project steps in our sector. This could contain six sessions in 2020, the first being held in early February. Each session would include a topic expert and would be roughly one hour in duration. The proposed first sessions are:

1. Affordable housing 101 – key concepts, housing need, and addressing the gaps
2. The development process – development application, the rezoning process and municipal incentives for affordable housing builds
3. NIMBY– Unpacking the Nimby toolkit

The Panel was asked to support this initiative by circulating it to their contacts. The list of proposed topics and possible speakers as well as the tentative dates will be sent in an email following the meeting. The Chair requested that the Panel provide feedback. Discussion ensued and it was suggested that the Workshops can then be placed in a manual as a resource.

- 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 been translated into French and Arabic. The Panel was informed that this can now be placed in the newsletter and distributed. The files will be sent out to members by the Chair to distribute as they see fit.

- Housing Catalyst Fund

The application period for 2020 Housing Catalyst Fund grants is now closed. A selection committee has been formed and decisions are anticipated before the end of the first quarter. The committee is scheduled to meet January 9, 2020.

- Property Standards

Attempts were made to reach out to Eastern Health to see if they would be interested in the 'Safe and Healthy Housing' Presentation. There will be follow up as there has not yet been a response. Gail Thornhill to contact Lisa Gilbert of Eastern Health. Staff are considering offering an open community presentation. It was noted that members can contact the Chair if an organization represented on the Panel would like to take part.

- Land

Habitat for Humanity will be applying for rezoning on the City owned Eric Street parcel of land. Internal consultations have been held throughout December to investigate any concerns raised with the proposed development to date. This information will be prepared as a report for Council as part of the rezoning process. The group will be kept informed as this moves forward.

- 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. A communications sub-committee has been struck to guide this work. Three short videos have been prepared with inanimate objects that are common to every home. The script is aimed at producing self-reflection for the viewer to chip away at the perceptions of affordable housing. A new affordable housing website page is being developed to support the videos when they are released. The link will be sent out after coordination on a landing web page with the city. The hope is to begin circulating the videos in quarter 1.

#### **4.2 NIMBY Toolkit Update**

The Affordable Housing Working Group determined there was value in updating the CHBA NL NIMBY toolkit to include new case studies, an updated contact list and revised City of St. John's Planning Process. The update is now complete and ready to be relaunched.

The Panel discussed the timeline to release the updated toolkit and the AHWG's position on broadening the toolkit's reach through presentations and sharing. The following points were noted:

- Canadian Home Builders Association website link will be shared by City of St. John's.
- Panel discussed a possible launch of the new toolkit at the NIMBY workshop.
- New introduction outlines the changes made to the toolkit.
- It was noted that one image should be changed in the updated copy of the NIMBY toolkit included in the agenda. Emily Timmins to send photo to Simone Lilly.

### **5. OTHER BUSINESS**

#### **5.1 Emergency Shelters**

Council has 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 City's current interactions with emergency shelters include:

**Regulatory** - In partnership with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, the City provides assistance with inspections and enforcement of the province's Emergency Shelter Program. On a pilot basis, the City of St. John's will inspect all buildings used for private

emergency shelters every six months and nonprofit emergency shelters annually.

**Information** - The City documents information about emergency shelters as part of efforts to keep a non-market housing inventory.

**Planning** - Development decisions with regards to emergency shelters are laid out in the City's Municipal Plan and Development Regulations.

**Advocacy and system planning** - Via EHSJ (Part of the City until April 2020) - End Homelessness St. John's continues to support efforts and help lead discussion on the state of emergency shelters, as the system planning organization for St. John's.

Discussion on emergency shelters ensued and the following points were made:

- The City should have a stronger capacity to deal with individuals with mental health issues.
- End Homelessness St. John's provided an update to the Panel on the meetings held in November and December with Minister Dempster. Commitment was made to continue the conversation. The next meeting date is to be determined.
- Within those meetings it was noted that the RNC mentioned that 15% of the calls to private shelters are criminal related and the vast majority are mental health issues. This speaks to the need that shelters with services are important.
- A member of the committee suggested that the AHWG can provide advocacy points with recommendations to support Council.
- It was requested that Ayon Shahed draft a reference document for the Panel.

## **5.2 Verbal Update - Scope and Context of the Affordable Housing Working Group**

The Chair provided a verbal update about the scope and context of the Affordable Housing Working Group. End Homelessness St. John's is leaving the City in April 2020. It was suggested that the group then become the "Housing and Homelessness Working Group" to widen the topics and discussion and the terms of reference can be amended if necessary, to specifically outline the criteria covered. Discussion ensued

and the consensus of the group was to agree with this change. A decision note is to be drafted and brought to Committee of the Whole.

**5.3 Visitors to St. John's**

Ayon Shahed of Choices for Youth gave a brief update to the group. The CEO of the Canadian Housing Transformation Center will be in St. John's the first week of February to present a broad overview of their program by holding presentations and setting up meetings with housing and the City. It was recommended by a member of the Committee that contact is made with Stacey House at First Light. It was noted that the morning of February 6 the Network has already been booked and the space can be used for the presentation.

**5.4 Verbal Update - Office of the City Clerk**

The Legislative Assistant gave a verbal update from the Office of the City Clerk on attendance and participation. It was requested that members RSVP to invitations as soon as they are sent out as this gives the organizer time to ascertain there is quorum and the meeting can go ahead as planned. A reminder email will be sent to those with no response and members can advise via email that they will be attending. Attendance is required.

The Office of the City Clerk periodically reviews attendance for the various advisory committees and working groups to ensure membership is current and maintains active involvement. Some memberships are due for renewal in March and an email will be sent out to those affected with instructions on what is needed by the Office of the City Clerk to maintain membership to this group.

The next meeting date will be set at the end of each meeting.

**6. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting has been scheduled for February 25, 2020 at 11:30 am.

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:31 pm.

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CHAIRPERSON, SIMONE LILLY