

ST. JOHN'S

Affordable Housing Working Group Minutes

May 16, 2019

12:00 p.m.

4th Floor, City Hall

Present:

- Simone Lilly, Affordable Housing & Development Facilitator, Chairperson
- Jill Snow, CMHC
- Gail Thornhill, Stella's Circle
- Grayson Kelly, NLHC
- Emily Timmons, Poverty Reduction, Gov NL
- Victoria Belbin, Canadian Homebuilders Association
- Andrew Harvey, First Light
- Doug Pawson, End Homelessness St. John's
- Judy Tobin, Manager of Housing
- Karen Chafe, Supervisor – Office of the City Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Moved By Victoria Belbin

Seconded By Gail Thornhill

That the agenda be adopted as presented

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

The Chair updated Committee members on a proposed change to the Committee's reporting structure to Council.

3.1 Adoption of Minutes - March 7, 2019

Moved By Gail Thornhill

Seconded By Andrew Harvey

That the minutes of the Affordable Housing Working Group held on March 7, 2019 be adopted as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. BUSINESS ARISING

4.1 Information Note: Update and Discussion on Affordable Housing Initiatives

CITY OF ST. JOHN'S HOUSING NEEDS STUDY UPDATE: A new consultant has been engaged to complete this work. Drafts have been reviewed by Jill Snow and Simone Lilly and a final report is expected in the next two weeks. Document will be circulated to the AHWG for review and to advise on next steps.

LAND INVENTORY (of City owned land): The Legal Department has been working with Non-Profit to identify parcels of City owned land for potential projects. Four properties have been circulated through associated City departments and have received favorable comments speaking to their potential for redevelopment. Recommendations for one parcel of land have been prepared and discussion on the other three parcels will take place with the AHWG.

REVITALIZING POLICY: Envision St. John's, prepared as a result of a comprehensive review, will replace the current St. John's Municipal Plan (2003) and Development Regulations (1994). The Envision St. John's Development Regulations were presented at Council on March 4, 2019 for adoption-in-principle. With the formal adoption-in-principle, the draft Municipal Plan and Development Regulations documents have been sent to Municipal Affairs for provincial review and release. This has been stalled due to the provincial election.

The implementation strategies reflected in Envision St. John's include

- Allow subsidiary dwelling units in as many residential zones as possible
- Incorporate provisions for tiny homes
- Support intensification and mixed-use development
- Allow small apartment buildings in some residential zones

- Make best use of land base to provide affordable housing
- In new neighbourhoods, plan development around the parks and open space network, with an emphasis on compact, walkable residential neighbourhoods, with a mix of uses and employment areas along primary transportation corridors
- Continue to require new developments to consult with the St. John's Transportation Commission regarding public transit infrastructure requirements.

MUNICIPAL FEES: A Decision note to expand the exemption of municipal fees to private developers of affordable housing who have confirmed approval under the National Housing Strategy's National Housing Co-Investment Fund - new construction (NHCF), Federal Lands Initiative (FLI) and Innovation Fund (IF) was unanimously approved on April 29th.

The equivalent percentage of municipal fees will be waived for the percentage of affordable units of a project, with confirmed written approval under the three National Housing Strategy programs.

Ms. Belbin referenced an Urban Housing Committee (Urban Council) chaired by Steve Porter who is a huge advocate for partnerships. She agreed to refer the matter to the next meeting of the Urban Council.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY:

Interdepartmental Committee

- Implementation of the affordable housing strategy 2019-2028 will require action across the organization. The IAHWG will lead and coordinate the internal components of this strategy. It is anticipated that the IAHWG will meet quarterly and when possible preceding AHWG meetings.

Support from the following Divisions has been identified:

1. Division of Transportation Engineering
2. Division of Planning
3. Division of Regulatory Services
4. Division of Marketing & Communications
5. Division of Family & Leisure Services

6. Other Divisions will be consulted and included as required

Terms of reference were drafted for the IAHWG and the introductory meeting was held on May 10th

Implementation Strategy Working Document (road map)

Implementation strategies have been divided by division responsible for leading action items.

Timelines, next steps and priority areas for each have been laid out. This will serve as a guiding document for implementation and will be updated as actions move forward.

CENTRAL HOUSING WAITLIST: We continue to have conversations with CRA re. granting direct access to Option Cs for applicants and tenants. CRA requires legislation that states that we can collect this information. The City of St. John's Act (governing the municipal affairs of St. John's) outlines authority to acquire land, enter into housing agreements, provide housing, adopt Building Codes etc. but does not reference setting rents, collecting rent or verifying income. We have agreements signed with CMHC/NLHC that require us to verify income and dictate how we must calculate rent however these are agreements and do not provide the authority required. NLHC were granted permission under the Housing Corporation Act and the Intergovernmental Affairs Act. CSJ does not qualify under either of these. Our next step is to begin advocacy for this to be addressed during the review of the St. John's Act that is currently underway.

EVOLUTION OF NON-MARKET HOUSING PROJECT: We have met with a researcher that is considering undertaking this project as part of their post doctorate. We have acquired permission from the 4 individuals that attended the history discussion to share the recording of the session. We can now proceed setting up an agreement with this researcher to outline scope and ownership of work.

SOCIAL MARKETING STRATEGY: AHDF met with Communications following the March AHWG meeting. As suggested, we would like to move forward with this project as a collaborative community led project. As a next step. a sub – committee could be established to take on building the profiles campaign to be launched in November 2019. Members agreed to give this some thought as to whether or not and/or who should be selected from their areas to be represented.

4.2 Rental Rate Advocacy

The Affordable Housing Working Group was asked to consider undertaking advocacy for rent control legislation in Newfoundland. A backgrounder has been prepared and is now before the Committee for discussion.

During discussion, Ms. Tobin retired from the meeting at 12:43 pm.

Following discussion, the motion below was put forth:

Moved By Andrew Harvey
Seconded By Gail Thornhill

That there be no further consideration or advocacy of rent control given the background information presented during this meeting.

For (3): Gail Thornhill, , Victoria Belbin, and Andrew Harvey

Abstain (1): Jill Snow Emily Timmons, Grayson Kelly

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5 to 0)

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 Mapping Housing Needs

The Affordable Housing and Development Facilitator attended a presentation by a Cape Breton University researcher on affordable housing and neighborhood deprivation. <https://www.cbu.ca/news-events/story/funding-awarded-to-cbu-professor-for-research-on-affordable-housing-and-neighbourhood-deprivation/>.

A non-market housing inventory of the City of St. John's has been completed and as a next step staff would like to explore similar mapping as was done in Cape Breton.

Such a tool would be instrumental for planning purposes particularly in relation to transit and community supports.

The Chair will work with staff and members to develop a research statement and will keep the Committee apprised of progress in this regard.

Ms. Belbin also advised that the NIMBY toolkit which is currently posted on the CHBA website, needs to be updated. Chairperson Lilly proposed that a decision note be prepared for referral to Council for an RFP to update the NIMBY toolkit. The revised toolkit would then be placed on the City's website. Emily Timmins suggested that this may be a suitable project for her summer student to take on and would follow up with Simone. Victoria suggested that in sync with this initiative that the case studies be updated, i.e. Garrison Hill and other developments that took place.

5.2 Land Parcels Discussion and Next Steps

Chairperson Lilly spoke to the various parcels of land that may be available for affordable housing development. She requested input from the Committee on what areas to be targeted. The Planning Dept. would have to be consulted on the potential for development. The Chair will schedule a meeting in this regard.

Ms. Snow retired from meeting at 1:44 pm.

5.3 Upcoming Federal Election

The Group was reminded that the next federal election will be held October 2019. For the past several months, CHRA has been hard at work preparing a campaign designed to influence the electoral platforms and positions of the major political parties, and ultimately, the next government. CHRA formally launched their election campaign – A Home For Everyone on May 8th, 2019. Key election messages have been developed along with a campaign website and there are opportunities to become involved in the coming election campaign.

The Group discussed whether the AHWG should participate through the CHRA campaign and/or write local candidates as a collaborative voice on social, non profit and community housing needs.

5.4 Housing Forum Clinic

Chairperson Lilly proposed a workshop series introducing affordable housing themes including the planning process and municipal tools available to them. Such topics could include dealing with NIMBY, universal design, innovation, funding and designing of affordable housing.

Ms. Belbin expressed interest in partaking in this initiative, including other municipalities as well as the leveraging of corporate sponsors to assist.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

7. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

To be determined.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 1:54 pm.

Simone Lilly
Chairperson