



Making a difference...together

Minutes of a Meeting of the Regional Housing Advisory Committee

October 4, 2022, 2:00 - 4:00 pm, Virtual Meeting (Microsoft Teams)

PRESENT: Nadine Kawata (Chair), Kathy Witcher (Co-chair), Don McTavish, Kirsten Baillie, Stirling Scory, Andrea Hudson, Bill Brown, Danella Parks, David Corey, Kerriann Coady,

STAFF: Don Elliott, Emily Sinclair, Gina Dolinsky, Jelena Putnik (recorder)

REGRETS: Alita Tocher, Luke Mari, Lindsay Chase, Brian Green.

Meeting called to order at 2:02 pm.

1. Territorial acknowledgement

Chair Nadine Kawata offered a territorial acknowledgement of the Indigenous communities in the Capital Region.

2. Welcome and approval of Agenda

MOVED by David Corey, **SECONDED** by Kathy Witcher

That the agenda be approved.

CARRIED

3. Approval of July 29, 2022 Minutes

MOVED by Danella Parks, **SECONDED** by Don McTavish

That the minutes from the June 29, 2022 RHAC meeting be approved as circulated.

CARRIED

4. Business Arising

- **CRD to add review of more detailed spatial data on the relationship between vehicle ownership and recent net new dwelling units to Forward Looking Agenda.**
Emily Sinclair reported that numbers of new dwellings in proximity to transit routes is mismatched. Currently, bus network is planned where density is and not where it is planned to be, thereby resulting in new builds within low transit areas. BC Transit is aware of issue. For this reason, focus was on vehicle ownership by household, with the goal of using data to incentivize other modes of transport.
- **CRD to explore best routes for advocacy and engagement of Provincial Minister of Housing on work and recommendations from RHAC.**
Emily Sinclair explained this is outside mandate of committee and CRD staff. Advocacy, at this level, rests with CRD Board. She suggested advocacy from RHAC go in form of recommendations to Board, with focus on alignment/misalignment with strategic priorities.
- **CRD to review past minutes for discussions related to defining affordability and distribute to RHAC members to support future discussions.**
Discussion highlighted that CMHC's definition of affordability as 30% of gross income is viewed with more flexibility at federal level than regionally. Sooke District's definition of affordability was identified as good example that addressed complexity of issue.

5. Topics for Discussion:

- **Implementation of Future Housing Priorities and Partnerships in the Capital Region Report (*Attachment D of meeting package*) – Presented by Emily Sinclair, Senior Manager, Regional Planning**
 - Presentation provided summary of report and highlighted three main issues to affordable housing and continuation beyond end of Housing First program:
 1. Address right supply of housing and right places. Rural housing strategy needed.
 2. What is the best way to provide units? (Shovel ready purchase or land acquisition?)
 3. Do we have sufficient seed money to be ready to respond to calls for funding from higher levels of government?
 - a. Emily identified challenges in CRD By-laws, in that they do not provide CRD with ability set aside fund to wait or explore other funding opportunities.

Report recommendations approved by CRD Board July 13, 2022: (*added by Board)

1. That the CRD Board endorse the Future Housing Priorities and Partnerships in the Capital Region;
2. That staff be directed to proceed with development of a Program Framework and identification of funding partnership contributions to address unmet housing needs in the capital region based on the priorities identified in Future Housing Priorities and Partnerships in the Capital Region;
3. That the CRD Board direct staff to include a fourth area of focus in the Program Framework to ensure the rapid and ongoing expansion of newly built publicly owned affordable housing in the CRD;
4. That funding for the establishment, and seed investment for a scaled up regional housing program be included in the 2023 preliminary budget; *
5. That staff explore creative opportunities for raising capital including from social impact investors with funds to invest in housing.*
6. That the CRD Board advocate to the Province of BC to give the right of first refusal for public and non-profit agencies to purchase multi-unit rental buildings.*

Questions and Discussion:

Kathy: *What can RHAC do to support recommendations of this report?*

- Emily suggested any input from members with experience developing affordable housing in rural regions, would be very helpful to CRD.
- Kristen Baillie discussed project on Salt Spring Island and the issues of water accessibility throughout the Gulf Islands that make building difficult.
- Others highlighted struggle with low density zoning in rural communities making economics of affordability unachievable, especially when land prices are still high in these areas. Density zoning is needed, as well as creative solutions of what is allowable. Cowichan Valley was noted as an example of creative solutions.
- Kathy Witcher commented that recent introduction of DCCs in Sooke, coupled by number of DCC's required, is making projects unaffordable for the private sector. She suggested more infrastructure is needed, as well as lower DCCs to draw development.
- Stirling reflected on his experience in West Kelowna in ALR, where they benefited from bylaws allowing secondary suites and carriage houses.
- Danella noted economic demands on other services/development need to accompany housing to provide economic growth.

Emily: *Does anyone have experience with/comment on BC Gov't new Complex Care Initiative?*

- Don McTavish stated initiative will be best for borderline-housed/challenged individuals, and will provide proper supportive housing, but was disappointed no capital dollars associated.

- Don highlighted significant challenge with clients uninterested in supports. With complex care being voluntary and many opting out, the risk of safety is escalating for staff and other clients, and subsequent 24/7 staffing requirement is posing financial challenges to operations. Police incident at Cool Aid last week resulted in weapon seizure and property damage.
- Kathy appreciated insight into complex care challenge and echoed need for purpose-built capital
- Don is hopeful addiction will soon be recognized as full mental health issue so that Mental Health Act can intervene when person is determined to be a danger to themselves or to others. He felt increase coordination between agencies and quick modular builds would be a good compliment to the Complex Care Initiative.
- Kristen suggested clear and consistent messaging be developed on this issue from RHAC. Nadine indicated this can be done at future meeting.
- **CMHC Affordable Housing Innovation Fund Rent-to-Own Stream**
 - Bill asked if anyone had experience with CMHC's Rent to Own Program? Developer in early stages inquired and would like to know if CMHC has supports. Jelena will follow-up.
 - Stirling noted that eligible applicants can be municipalities and asked if any of the municipalities had experience as housing providers and what that looked like financially?
 - Andrea stated that City of Victoria hasn't had any experience but is setting up policies and regulatory system so opportunities can come easier in Victoria. They are looking at what this means to residential rental tenure zoning if you are in a rent-to-own continuum, and what legal agreements and zoning need to look like.
 - Nadine echoed this consideration for Saanich as well, as some incentives are linked to tenure-only, and municipality is exploring ways to stay flexible.
 - Bill cited Whistler as example of municipality with units, both rental and ownership, under Whistler Housing Authority. Banff is another example.

6. Priority Recommendations for CRD Hospitals and Housing Committee

- Danella asked if there was a way to initiate and leverage the funding from provincial and federal governments to recreate the opportunity fund?
- Andrea asked if ideas generated today will have an opportunity to come back to RHAC one more time to be finalized, prior to being forwarded to HHC and CRD Board?
- Emily clarified orientation and strategic priority setting timeline for the new CRD Board.
 - November is new Board orientation
 - Late Nov 2022– late Jan 2023 CRD Board Strategic Planning. Iterative Process.
 - End of November, long list of Board priorities generated
 - Dec – mid January. Staff analysis for level of effort to deliver them and gather any useful information for Board. Bundling priorities into categories.
 - Late January, second session with Board to finalize strategic priorities.
 - February - Corporate Plan development by staff to implement new priorities
- With iterative process, there is time for RHAC to provide recommendations.
- Priorities should be clear enough to provide direction to staff, and for staff to do meaningful reporting back against priorities, but not so specific that it is prescriptive in projects or actions.
- Consider what is actionable and achievable from a Board perspective. If there are activities that require change from the federal or provincial government, or an external agency, be very clear what the ask is. Ideally there would be a mix of actionable items and advocacy items.
- Nadine asked: If RHAC held a December meeting and provided a final set of recommendation to Board strategic planning then, would timing work?
- Emily: Yes. At December meeting point, committee could provide feedback to Board identified "long-list" and additional things for consideration and/or recommendations.

- Bill Brown: CRD's Housing Affordability Program has assisted small municipality with limited staff capacity, such as Esquimalt, in administering affordable ownership properties. Esquimalt would like to see this program continued/expanded. Emily suggested this should come through both elected officials and RHAC recommendations, recognizing role CRD can play in supporting capacity in municipalities and leveraging collective strength.

7. Roundtable

- Nadine: CMHC – Sustainable Affordable Housing Grant has been issued. Shared with group.
- Andrea: Three new neighbourhood plans as part of Villages and Corridors planning (Hillside-Quadra, Fernwood, North Park) have resulted in new OCP designations called “housing opportunity areas” to entice housing and other development. Missing Middle initiative deferred to new council. Staff currently working on developing rental incentives.
- Don McTavish: no update
- Sterling: Working on new OCP – will be starting this fall. Looking at planning regulations, provision of housing, possibility of carriage houses and secondary suites.
- Kerianne: Finishing province-wide study on permit process timelines. Study focuses on average timelines across BC and how supply is not keeping up with demand. Having ability to get housing options done faster, is the intent of this study.
- Bill Brown: Esquimalt has approximately 1000 units under construction and 1000 in the permitting/rezoning process. Looking at demo-viction issue where older apartment buildings are being replaced by larger new ones. Council deferred recent project when citizen group highlighted impact on fixed-income community members impacted. Esquimalt asked Victoria for help with this issue. Andrea indicated Victoria would share tenant assistance policy and connect their tenant assistance planner. Policy is negotiating tool used in rezoning process.
- Kristen Baillie: BC Housing has a number of supportive housing units opening this fall. Cedar Grove, to be operated by Cool Aid, will have 72 units and be complete in a couple of weeks. BCH views Regional Housing First Program as a strong initiative because it pulls partners together and would like to continue the initiative. They find relationship beneficial and responsive. Continuing the initiative can help BCH leverage more money.
- Danella: Residential Tenancy Act is now very strong in protection of tenants at time of sale of property. It is interesting that this protection has not been extended in demolition and renovation. Danella suggested this as possible area of advocacy.
- David: No update.
- Gina: CRD Regional Housing First Program has two last proposals going to Board. Reaching Home program is funded to March 2024 and RFP just closed for next round of funding into community. Housing Agreement Program continues administering affordable ownership units.

Don Elliott joined 3:46pm

- Don: CRD actively preparing 2023-24 corporate budgets, working on strategic planning with new board, preparing for housing affordability to be key priority and working towards that

8. Next Meeting: Jelena will send poll to find a time in early December.

9. Adjournment

MOVED by Bill, **SECONDED** by Sterling

That the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned at 3:51 pm.