

## **Housing & Homelessness Advisory Committee**

Meeting held March 22, 2022

A meeting of the Housing & Homelessness Advisory Committee is held this day commencing at 10:00 o'clock a.m. via Zoom video conference, there being present the following members:

Marina Clemens, Chair  
Councillor Kieran McKenzie  
Jessica Brunet  
Fiona Coughlin  
Warden Gary McNamara, County of Essex  
Jim Steele  
Leigh Vachon  
Angela Yakonich

### ***Regrets received from:***

Judith Binder  
Kathy Hay  
Eric Hill  
Joyce Zuk

### ***Also present are the following resource personnel:***

Kirk Whittal, Executive Director, Housing & Children's Services  
Kelly Goz, Coordinator, Housing Administration & Development  
Tina Moore, Coordinator Housing Administration & Development  
Jennifer Tanner, Manager Homelessness & Housing Support  
Jeannie Diamond Francis, County of Essex  
Karen Kadour, Committee Coordinator

### **1. Call to Order**

The Chair calls the meeting to order at 10:02 o'clock a.m. and the Committee considers the Agenda being Schedule A attached hereto, matters which are dealt with as follows:

**2. Disclosure of Interest**

None disclosed.

**3. Adoption of the Minutes**

Moved by Councillor McKenzie, seconded by Warden McNamara,  
That the minutes of the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee of its  
meeting held January 25, 2022 **BE ADOPTED** as presented.  
Carried.

**4. Business Items**

**4.1 Residential Rental Licensing Pilot Study (RRL)**

The Chair refers to the submission to Council regarding the Residential Rental Licensing Pilot Study from herself, J. Zuk and A. Angelidis and asks for comments from the Committee.

Councillor McKenzie indicates that it is important for HHAC to promote the availability of housing for those in need. He adds that the residential rental licensing is seeking to address the conditions under which renters are living and to look for ways to ensure and promote safety for people living in rental units. There are a number of bad landlords in our community and the RRL is one of the ideas that Council has brought forward to address that. He proposes some additional language to add to the submission to Council relating to safe tenancies.

F. Coughlin concurs with Councillor McKenzie that something has to be done to ensure safe tenancies.

J. Steele notes there has been discussion about losing rental stock, and he suggests that a statement that we continue to pursue ways to increase the affordable housing stock in addition to this pilot study be provided.

J. Tanner states that she along with K. Goz have had e-mail conversations with Jude Malott, Executive Initiatives Coordinator, regarding ways administratively to measure the impact (if possible) on people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

Warden McNamara advises that we are in the position whereby there are advantages to the landlord and not to the tenant.

Councillor McKenzie suggests adding the following sentence to the RRL submission from HHAC to City Council – *“The Committee recognizes the need to ensure rental units in our community must be safe and in compliance with all applicable regulations.”*

The Chair expresses concern regarding the term ‘applicable regulations’ as some of the regulations are very restrictive even for landlords.

Councillor McKenzie responds that if the regulations are so restrictive, HHAC should be making recommendations to change those regulations.

Moved by Councillor McKenzie, seconded by F. Coughlin,  
That the Residential Rental Licensing Feedback document provided by the Chair, A. Angelidis and J. Zuk **BE APPROVED** and **AMENDED** to add the following sentence provided by Councillor McKenzie – *“The Committee recognizes the need to ensure rental units in our community must be safe and in compliance with all applicable regulations.”*  
Carried.

## 4.2 Updates by Administration

### (a) Canada Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) for 2022

T. Moore provides an overview of the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit for 2022 as follows:

- The Canada Ontario Housing Benefit is a federal provincial housing allowance program providing payment to low-income households, and the 2022 program is now accepting applications.
- The COHB is a monthly housing subsidy to assist low-income households with the ability to pay housing costs.
- This funding can assist with housing costs on or after April 1, 2022.
- The COHB is tied to the person or household, rather than the physical housing unit, allowing the benefit to move with the household province wide.
- The COHB’S purpose locally is to increase the affordability of rental housing for individuals and households in Windsor and Essex County.
- The estimated number of households to access a COHB 2022 is between 250 and 260 households based on the average monthly benefit that was seen in 2021. It is a significant allocation of \$1.2 million dollars.
- CHC is the administrator of the COHB.

**(b) Review of the Housing with Supports Program**

J. Tanner provides the following comments relating to the Housing with Supports Program:

- City Administration has engaged with a consulting firm to evaluate the Housing with Supports program in Windsor and Essex County with the goal of transforming the system to align with industry best practices and the 10 Year Housing & Homelessness Plan.
  - To date, nine consultations have been held with stakeholders from the health, justice, emergency shelters and homelessness sectors.
  - Separate consultations have been held with home administrators/owners, staff and residents and the consultants are now reaching out to elected officials to solicit their input.
  - The goal is to complete all consultation activities by the end of March 2022.
  - The final report will be presented to Windsor and Essex County Councils possibly in June 2022.

J. Diamond Francis advises that through a review of data, there is a large proportion of Housing with the Support residents in the County that are coming directly from homelessness and another large proportion that are coming directly from hospital. Some of these individuals would have been either at risk of homelessness prior to their hospital admission or experiencing homelessness. She adds that a follow-up report may be done if required to look at those resident profiles and at the data that has been collected.

**(c) By Names Prioritized List Data – February 22**

K. Goz provides the following update relating to the By Names Prioritized List Data:

- The numbers for the month of February 2022 have increased slightly, however, we are starting to see a lower number of households move into housing per month which is attributing to the increases. (472 experiencing homelessness in February 2022).
- Typically, we have seen 50-70 households move out of homelessness into housing per month which has led them to see decreases in homelessness.
- As they start to see less households move out of homelessness into housing, conversely will see that number of people in households experiencing homelessness increase over time.
- Not sure if February was an odd month or if this is the beginning of a trend because of our housing stock and housing availability has changed so drastically over the last year.
- Something for HHAC to pay attention to particularly if the residential rental licensing project is approved through Council.

Councillor McKenzie asks if there is a trend, HHAC should be contemplating what should be recommended to Council in terms of concrete steps to address those challenges.

K. Goz responds that over the last few months their department has seen many people displaced from their homes due to fires or events that were out of their control. Historically the teams through Windsor-Essex Housing Connections have housed folks in their own units. They have now started to shift to looking at doing home shares or bringing two people together to rent a two or three bedroom apartment to try to increase the affordability to the tenants.

J. Brunet asks how difficult is it for folks to navigate our system for someone who is not attached to intensive supports, or has a case worker that has the knowledge to help someone navigate the system. She questions if HHAC could discuss the ease and accessibility of navigating our system.

Councillor McKenzie asks Administration to respond regarding what HHAC can do to set a process in motion that is manageable from a work flow perspective but could provide information to make a recommendation to Council in terms of breaking down administrative barriers.

J. Tanner responds that some of the work is underway at this time. In 2021, City Council approved Administration to engage with Glos Arch + Eng Consulting to look at a housing hub model. The consultation is built on the success of the Homelessness & Housing Help Hub (H4) at Windsor Water World which was established as a COVID response but has fulfilled a need in the community. The consultation will explore what can be done for Windsor-Essex County on a permanent basis in terms of providing a centralized access point to help people find housing. The Consultants will identify potential locations, including what the physical structure of the building should look like in order to service people better and what partnerships will need to be brought in to assist in finding housing for people. The hub model and strategy will help improve navigation of the system, housing placements and how we address homelessness.

L. Vachon states that one of the limitations of HHAC is not cross-sectoral. Anecdotally from being on the front lines, the challenge is still our hospital systems and the way that psychiatric care is approached and asks if there are any updates around that. In terms of the housing and homelessness and what has been done at H4, the future of the hub is extraordinary. If the services do not exist to link people to, we will chronically fail and people will fail out of housing because they will not be receiving the mental health support that they need.

K. Whittal concurs with L. Vachon that this is an important issue because a few issues are being treated, however, the long term support that led to those folks to be successful in housing in some cases presents a challenge where the supports are later removed which then becomes a housing challenge.

The Chair advises that we have to understand the role of HHAC and adds that the homelessness component has only been added in the last four years to make the committee more relevant and to bring it under one umbrella.

J. Tanner states that upon receipt of the Consultant's report on the Housing Hub, a report to Council will be provided.

Councillor McKenzie proposes that Administration provide a report back to HHAC on ways to improve access to housing and homelessness supports by addressing administrative barriers and asks for comments from HHAC.

J. Tanner responds that what Councillor McKenzie is proposing is doable with one change – “to reduce administrative burdens”. Part of what will improve access has to do with partnerships and connections with other sectors and other agencies. The focus, she suggests, should not be on efficiencies or reducing administration but more broadly on how can we improve homelessness and housing supports.

Councillor McKenzie states he is looking for what falls within HHAC's immediate span of control to promote some of the objectives of HHAC.

K. Goz remarks that there is a need to talk with tenants or perspective tenants on what they see or perceive to be barriers. Reducing an administrative barrier sometimes from an administrative side seems like it is “our barriers” but it is about reducing barriers for tenants to access homelessness and housing supports. It should be focused on the person or the household and not on housing administration.

J. Brunet suggests wording relating to improving the navigability of accessing our system. Supports and services are one thing, but knowing how to navigate the system is very important.

J. Diamond Francis indicates that whatever language is used, that it is clear that this refers to Windsor-Essex County because if we are talking about accessibility issues, it is compounded in the County. It is more difficult for County residents to access any type of housing and homelessness service at the present time.

K. Whittal refers to the 10 Year Housing & Homelessness Master Plan and adds that the strategies being discussed are already part of the Plan.

The Chair concurs with K. Whittal that most of what is being discussed is in the 10 Year Plan and suggests reviewing the Plan as a Committee and to bring back points that need to be strengthened. She adds that the 10 Year Plan is included in HHAC's mandate.

J. Tanner responds states that they are always striving for continuous improvement and achieving the goals and the strategies in the Plan. The work that they are doing in terms of reducing homelessness is guided by Built for Zero Canada. She

suggests that if HHAC wants see improvements in how the system is navigated, it may want to identify this as one of its priorities,.

J. Brunet asks as a HHAC member, is she able to work on an improvement project regarding navigation of the system. If so, she volunteers to undertake this improvement project. She adds that this will work in conjunction with the Master Plan. The data to be collected could be as simple as let's follow someone through the system when they arrive at a shelter; where do they go, and how many times do the intake forms switch hands.

Councillor McKenzie suggests that HHAC at its next meeting, review the 10 Year Housing & Homelessness Master Plan and pick out those pieces that need to be reinforced and emphasized as areas of focus as Council needs to be challenged and to implement the 10 Year Master Plan.

Warden McNamara advises that the role of any committee (in particular with stakeholders), is critical in dealing with day-to-day operations of our communities. There should be an opportunity for committees to challenge Council and Administration. He remarks that there will be an additional crisis on housing due to the tens of thousands of Ukrainians who will be coming to our communities soon.

The Chair suggests that the Committee at its next meeting, review the 10 Year Housing & Homelessness Master Plan to determine the gaps and to take a look at the navigation piece.

K. Whittal advises that Administration reports annually to Council on the progress of the 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Master Plan.

L. Vachon refers to the spirit of what Councillor McKenzie and Warden McNamara are saying and perhaps we should ask Administration what they need from HHAC in order to support them.

F. Coughlin responds that we do not need Administration to provide their recommendations; the recommendations have been provided in the 10 Year Housing & Homelessness Master Plan.

K. Whittal remarks that the 2021 Annual Report for the Housing & Homelessness Master Plan will be provided by the end of June 2022. He notes that the strategies will be on target or not on target. He suggests providing the 2020 Annual Report to HHAC to look at the strategies as a way of analyzing what might be the priorities for the Committee.

K. Goz responds that the draft Annual Report is provided to HHAC with an opportunity to provide feedback. Additionally, HHAC is copied on the more fulsome report that goes to both County and City Council along with the progress on the work plan identified in the 10 Year Housing & Homelessness Master Plan.

The Chair responds that over the years she has attended Council on numerous occasions to speak to the Housing & Homelessness Master Plan and the notable gaps were provided to previous members of Council. She concurs that the draft annual reports are provided to the Committee, however, with very little input from the members. She requests that J. Brunet provide a navigational stream to identify the gaps. She asks that the 2020 Annual Report be provided to HHAC (along with the gaps identified) and some of the items that will be included in the 2021 Report.

F. Coughlin challenges HHAC members to report back at the next meeting on what each service provider has done as it relates to the goals outlined in the Housing & Homelessness Master Plan.

J. Tanner responds that it is a direction that Administration has been trying to incorporate and this specific plan was written as a community plan. For example, Administration tries to reflect the successes and the achievements of numerous organizations in terms of building affordable housing, not just City-led projects

### **4.3 Updates from Members Organizations**

J. Steele advises the Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation had applied under the Rapid Housing Initiative under Goal #1 to increase supply. The work on homelessness has been good in the last three or four years and have done a good job as a community to identify where the homeless folks are. There will always be room to navigate better but have been increasing those numbers and overall the 10 Year Plan pulls it all together for them. We need to press Council to support the addition of more rent supplement units until more affordable housing can be built and the supply is increased. As there are many barriers for the applicant to get through the systems, there are also many barriers for the providers.

### **5. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held in May 2022 on a day and time to be determined.

### **6. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting is adjourned at 12:03 o'clock p.m.

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**CHAIR**

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**COMMITTEE COORDINATOR**