



NIAGARA REGIONAL HOUSING

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Minutes

NIAGARA REGIONAL HOUSING Board of Directors Meeting

#149 – 2016

NRH Boardroom
Campbell East, 3rd Floor
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way
Thorold, ON

February 19, 2016 – 9:00 A.M.

Attendees

Directors:

Paul Grenier, Chair
Councillor, Welland

Patrick O'Neill, Vice-Chair
Stakeholder,
Niagara-on-the-Lake

Henry D'Angela, Secretary
Councillor, Thorold

Karen Blackley, Treasurer
Stakeholder, Thorold

Linda Allen
Tenant, St. Catharines

Barbara Carroll
Public-at-Large, St. Catharines

Shirley Cordiner
Public-at-Large, Welland

Ken Goka
Stakeholder, Welland

James Hyatt
Stakeholder, St. Catharines

Kelly Kendrick
Stakeholder, Fort Erie

John Osczytko
Public-at-Large, St. Catharines

Andrew Petrowski
Councillor, St. Catharines

Walter Sendzik
Councillor St. Catharines

Selina Volpatti
Councillor, Niagara Falls

Directors/ Members:

P. Grenier, H. D'Angela, K. Kendrick, L. Allen
J. Osczytko, S. Volpatti, S. Cordiner
A. Petrowski at 9:19 A.M., W. Sendzik till 11:49 A.M.,
B. Carroll by teleconference till 11:16 A.M.

Regrets:

K. Blackley, J. Hyatt, P. O'Neill, K Goka

NRH Staff:

E. Balmain, D. Woiceshyn, D. White, V. Amato

Regional Staff:

C. Cousins, Director Homelessness & Com. Engmt
T. Frena, Program Financial Analyst

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 9:06 A.M.

1. Adoption of Agenda/Declaration of Conflict

Revised agenda and the following were distributed:
item 2.3.1. - Q & A's – Integrated Housing System (HIS)
item 4.1. – revised 4th Q 2015 report & 2015 Overview,
item 6.3. – 2015 Year End Summary
item 7.1. Confidential Report-Potential Sites for Development and
item 9.3. - Request for Information – Legal Services Staff Time

Moved by H. D'Angela

Seconded by L. Allen

That the revised agenda be ADOPTED.

CARRIED

There were no conflicts of interest declared at this time.

2. Approval of Minutes

2.1. Minutes of the January 22, 2016 Meeting

Moved by W. Sendzik

Seconded by J. Osczytko

That the minutes of the January 22, 2016 meeting be ADOPTED.

CARRIED

2.2. Minutes of SPEC 1-2016, February 8, 2016

Moved by W. Sendzik

Seconded by J. Osczytko

That the minutes of SPEC 1-2016, February 8, 2016 meeting be ADOPTED.

CARRIED

2.3. Business Arising

2.3.1. Commitment Agreement – Integrated Housing System

Moved by W. Sendzik

Seconded by S. Volpatti

- 1. That the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors APPROVES NRH joining the Housing Collaborative Initiative, a group of Housing service managers and administrators, who are launching an Integrated Housing Information System.***
- 2. Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors APPROVES NRH purchasing the fully integrated software package developed to create efficiencies and consolidate multiple housing programs into one system.***
- 3. That the NRH CEO be AUTHORIZED to execute an Integrated Housing System Agreement with Arcon ISTCL Group, Inc., (AIG) with a financial commitment of up to \$20 per social housing unit.***
- 4. All of the above PENDING Council approval of the NRH 2015 Year-End Surplus allocation.***

CARRIED

3. Presentation – not scheduled

4. Staff Reports

4.1. 4th Quarter 2015 Report to Board and Council – Report 16-149-4.1.

The CEO presented the 4th Quarter 2015 Report answering many requests for clarification regarding the Centralized Waiting List (CWL) chart (page 3) definitions and what exactly the stats represent.

A. Petrowski joined the meeting at 9:19 A.M.

It was asked if people in crisis, or those with greatest need, can be separated out?

The CEO replied that administration of the CWL is governed by numerous provincial rules and regulations which staff have to report on. The data that is currently tracked is based on operating and reporting requirements.

A discussion regarding Section A2 of the CWL chart on page 3 occurred.

The CEO explained that the CWL is designed in a chronological order as per legislation. The Ministry has established a *Special Provincial Priority* status for victims of domestic violence as a measure to help victims secure safe, affordable housing and not feel pressure to return to abusive relationships because of homelessness.

In addition, the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, allows service managers to create local priority categories for the area. In Niagara two priority categories have been established, *Urgent* and *Homeless*:

Urgent Status is intended to assist household members who have physical limitations and significantly compromised health because the building they are living in does not have an elevator and they are required to climb stairs to get to their unit. It also assists household members experiencing extreme hardship where relocation would reduce the risks and/or alleviate the hardship.

Homeless Status provides an increased opportunity for placement to households that are homeless.

SPP households are offered units first, then local priority households and finally units are offered to households not in a priority category. Households within each category are chosen based on the chronological order that applications were approved.

Definitions of the categories are listed on page 2 of the report.

Selina Volpatti wanted the list to be further broken down to show the number of individuals in each group? Can we tell the number of children and age ranges?

Staff was directed to bring a revised report to the next meeting, with definitions of terms/programs and what NRH is doing to address issues.

Action by: E. Balmain

Directors were requested to send comments and questions regarding this report to V. Amato by noon Friday March 5th, so the Executive committee can review at their March meeting.

The issue of fraud and misrepresentation of income and a possible “whistle blower” line was raised. The CEO advised that sometimes neighbours do report things to staff, however, investigations that are successful at the Landlord and Tenant Tribunal, are time consuming and staff resources are limited; this is also an issue for NRH Social Housing Provider partners. OW administrators are required to have Eligibility Review Officers (ERO) to investigate OW fraud. Approximately 30% of NRH tenants are OW or ODSP recipients.

Some Service Manager areas have Housing fraud investigation officers but since the position is not required nor funded by the ministry, it is less common. Given the increasing cost of housing subsidy, the number of housing ERO’s is growing.

*Moved by A. Petrowski
Seconded by H. D’Angela*

That the NRH Board of Directors APPROVE staff bringing forward a report on an Eligibility Review Officer for NRH, including financial implications, for the next meeting.

CARRIED

4.2. Revised Niagara Renovates Funding Program – Report 16-149-4.2.

Staff presented the report indicating that demand for the program is great and bringing funding forward would not only assist Niagara homeowners and landlords sooner, but also, equalize the funding and staff workload over years 3 to 5 of the program.

*Moved by S. Volpatti
Seconded by K. Kendrick*

That the Niagara Regional Housing Board APPROVES the revision to the allocation of the Niagara Renovates Program and the Rental Housing Component of the Investment in Affordable Housing Extension Program (IAH-E) for years 3, 4 & 5.

CARRIED

W. Sendzik declared a conflict of interest with any item relating to the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN.)

4.3. General Permission to move forward on Non-Binding Land Offers

An Expression of Interest triggers a 30 day extension on an option to purchase allowing a month to negotiate.

Directors Petrowski and Volpatti suggested working with Corporate Services, letting the Region purchase land, subject to the most efficient use of the property; would leave Federal/Provincial government funding exclusively for building.

5. New Business

5.1. Strategic Planning Session & Business Plan Discussion

Staff to poll the Board regarding availability dates once the NRH Organizational Structure Review has been completed; expected completion date by end of June 2016.

It was pointed out that due to numerous Director expiry dates in 2016, the Board could lose a wealth of corporate knowledge if the session was left till late in the year.

Concepts for the design of the 2016-2018 business plan need to be refined, report to be provided for the March meeting outlining the last NRH strategic planning process.

5.2. Green Energy Fund

An overview was provided and a brief discussion occurred regarding criteria for funding. NRH staff are working to ensure applications are submitted for eligible buildings, both NRH owned units and provider units.

5.3. Development Committee Restart for IAH-E

The CEO advised that potential development sites need to be vetted and asked that the NRH Development Committee be formally revived. The original Terms of Reference for the Committee included any three (3) NRH Directors along with NRH and Regional staff. However, once the committee was launched in early 2015, Councillor Directors had to excuse themselves from the committee due to issues of perceived conflict raised by Regional staff.

Recent correspondence from Finance staff reminded NRH to advise any Regional Councillor sitting on the development committee to assess their potential conflict of interest either current or future (real or perceived) and to refer them to Section 38 of the Procurement By-Law.

The CEO sought clarification and verification from the Board regarding whether or not the composition of the committee will be changed to exclude board members. Paul Grenier stated that he would follow-up with legal staff at the region for clarification.

*Moved by S. Volpatti
Seconded by L. Allen*

That the NRH Board of Directors DEFER this item to the next meeting and at which a hard copy of the IAH-E Development Committee Terms of Reference be provided for review.

CARRIED

6. General Manager’s Report

6.1. Financial Statements as at January 31, 2016 – not available

6.2. Meeting Technology

The CEO advised that NRH decided upon the “go-to” meeting technology with the assistance of the Region’s IT department, because it is typically user friendly and easy to join meetings. However, with the server providing only intermittent service, possibly due to start-up of EFMS, there may still be some issues.

6.3. 2015 Operating Surplus – Report 16-149-6.3.

*Moved by W. Sendzik
Seconded by J. Osczytko*

That the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors:

- 1) ***RECEIVE the 2015 NRH Variance Report: and,***
- 2) ***APPROVE the allocation of NRH 2015 Surplus as follows:***

Item	Description	Amount
2015 SURPLUS		\$ 883,070
1. Broadoak Tax Rebate	Allocate back to Broadoak capital as in previous years.	\$ 98,632
2. Housing Fraud	Housing Fraud Prevention Strategy	\$ 100,038
3. Caseload/Capacity Assessment Review	A capacity review is needed to address workflow balances, caseload levels and talent alignment with operational needs.	\$ 40,000
4. Mobile Workforce	To increase efficiencies and improve customer service by employees working with their clients, directly in their areas of responsibility.	\$ 50,000

5. Integrated Housing Information System	New software program developed by a consortium of Housing Service Managers would allow for a single access system that will provide access to accurate data on a more timely basis, as well as produce provider payment schedule files are compatible for integration with EFMS.	\$ 140,000
6. Strategic Plan	Board and management to create/update 2016 - 2019 strategic plan	\$ 25,000
7. Unforeseen Maintenance Costs	Transfer to capital reserve for unforeseen maintenance costs including life-safety, elevator and generator repairs.	\$ 429,400
TOTAL		\$ 883,070

and,

- 3) ***That the transfer of the year-end surplus of \$883,070 to the General Capital Levy Reserve (\$98,632) for the Broadoak Development project and to the Niagara Regional Housing reserve (\$784,438) BE APPROVED; and,***
- 4) ***That an amendment to the 2016 NRH operating budget for the above initiatives 2-7 to be funded from the Niagara Regional Housing reserve BE APPROVED; and,***
- 5) ***That the approved allocations for the NRH 2015 Surplus be FORWARDED to Council for approval.***

CARRIED

B. Carroll left the meeting at 11:16 A.M.

6.4. Annual General Meeting Planning

The Chair advised that he would like to make the AGM a community dinner event for approximately 200 people, inviting different stakeholder group representatives to attend. Possibly having noted McGill University professor A. Freedman, as a keynote speaker. One of the stakeholders has offered to organize the event as NRH staff resources are limited.

The past Chair advised that NRH has held community event AGM's in the past and turnout was poor. Another concern would be cost to NRH.

6.5. Alternate Service Delivery Review Task Force Appointments

CAO 1-2016, Update on Social Housing Alternate Service Delivery Review was distributed. The draft Terms of Reference for the committee calls for only 1 non-Councillor representative from the NRH Board. The Board deemed that 2 non-Councillor representatives from the NRH Board would be more appropriate.

*Moved by S. Volpatti
Seconded by A. Petrowski*

That, pending their acceptance, the NRH Board of Directors APPROVE the appointment of J. Hyatt and P. O’Neill to the Alternate Service Delivery Review Task Force.

CARRIED

Cathy Cousins left the meeting at 11:37 A.M.

7. Closed Session

*Moved by K. Kendrick
Seconded by J. Osczytko*

That the meeting MOVE INTO Closed Session to receive information of a confidential nature relating to a proposed or pending acquisition or disposition of land by the municipality or local board – Potential Sites for New Development – update.

CARRIED

- 7.1. February 19th, 2016 Update Report, Potential Sites for New Development – Report IC 16-149-7.1.

W. Sendzik left the meeting at 11:49 A.M.

S. Cordiner left the meeting 12:04 P.M. at which point quorum was lost and the meeting dissolved. No motion was made or staff direction given during the Closed Session.

Minutes Approved:

Chair

Secretary