

**Minutes of the
Secondary Suite Review Committee
Wednesday, February, 18, 2009
Oak Bay Municipal Hall Council Chambers**

Meeting called to order at 5:30pm

Attended by: Nils Jensen (Chair), Pam Copley, John Herbert, Tony Sharp, David Blades
Roy Thomassen (staff- non-voting)

Lise-Lotte Loomer (secretary- non-voting)

Regrets: Mayor Christopher M. Causton (ex-officio member), Colin Crisp

Minutes from February 4 meeting approved without changes.

Public Presentations

Presenter: Susan Draper, from Faith in Action

Ms. Draper handed out two brochures, see attachments: A Multi- Faith Initiative to Put More Heart into Services and Programs that Support the Poor and Homelessness in BC.

She voiced her concern about homelessness and poverty. This Saturday (February 21) between 1-2pm there will be a demonstration involving 20-25 people each wearing blue scarves in Oak Bay (all appropriate approvals are in place) demanding homes for all. She emphasized that housing is everyone's responsibility and not just an issue in the downtown core. She would like to see a by-law crafted that would encourage people to develop secondary suites. Referring to the Times Colonist letter to the editor, (February 18- see attachment) they are writing letters to Rich Coleman. There needs to be a balance between safety and a need for affordable housing.

Chair Jensen referred to the letter and read the key points out to the committee. Regarding the letter writer's comment about the cost of water it was noted that water use in Oak Bay is charged by volume.

Presenter: Tom Lane (see attachment)

Mr. Lane expressed the view that it is helpful for people to stay in their homes longer.

Current by-laws are discriminatory against lower income earners. The number of service sector employees has grown – given their level of income they are often the ones that need affordable accommodation. Mr. Lane suggested that parking should be a separate issue that may require its own by-law reform.

Both speakers were thanked after their presentations by the Committee.

Chair Jensen referred to copies of correspondence from Mrs. Lilia Wilson, on behalf of a dozen citizens from the North Henderson area, who are in agreement with secondary suites as long as certain conditions are met (those are listed on the back of the letter). Copies of the letter were circulated to the committee.

Guest speaker: Sarah Jones, Special Projects Planner/. Deputy Municipal Clerk, Town of View Royal

Chair Jensen asked Ms. Jones to describe the process and the results of secondary suites policy

Ms. Jones and the View Royal Council began work on the secondary suites policy in 2004. Council wanted to have a questionnaire based on the City of Abbotsford's questionnaire (see attachment). Following the survey workshops were conducted in three different neighbourhoods in View Royal. This culminated in a community wide Open House. Staff attended as recorders.

The questionnaire was useful; it outlined the following main issues/concerns identified by residents:

- parking
- owner occupancy should be required
- a secondary suite should fairly bear the costs of municipal services
- a home based business should not be allowed in a house that already has a suite

An advisory committee was struck following which a public hearing was held.

Council wanted to bring in the program over 2 years.

There were two Council workshops held to clarify the goals for any changes. Based on some lower mainland municipalities, Council looked at three types of secondary suites:

Type 1. unauthorized secondary suites

Type 2. authorized non-code compliant secondary suites

Type 3. authorized code compliant secondary suites

Type 2 Suites are regulated with the Secondary Suites program however they are not inspected for compliance with the BC Building Code.

In 2005, the Official Community Plan was changed. An opting out provision for neighbourhoods was incorporated into the changes - but it has not been resorted to.

Any additional solid waste/garbage generated by a suite requires the purchase of decals/tags.

The issue of additional burden on the sanitary sewer became a non-issues when the billing was changed from flat rate billing to volume billing.

An infrastructure fee of \$348 was considered. Lower mainland communities fees are in the \$200-\$400 range. There were complaints from people who would have to pay an infrastructure fee for relatives living with the family for free.

January 2006, Ipsos Reid was commissioned to conduct a telephone survey of 500 citizens (see attachment for final report). It was worth the money spent.

A workshop was held from homeowners who were going to have tenants. The workshop was run by Rental Owners BC (ROMS BC)

A deadline was set for Type 1 and 2 suites to register. After the deadline no further Type 1 or 2 are permitted.

There are 370 homeowners with type 1 secondary suites and 320 homeowners with type 2 suites.

Homeowners with both type 1 and type 2 re-register with the Town of View Royal every year. The renewal fee is \$100.00.

Homeowners cannot register with a type 2 suite if they missed the deadline. They must re-register yearly to maintain their status. They are required to sign a Statutory Declaration confirming Owner Occupancy.

Homeowners are required to post the permit in their rental suite.

If written complaint are received by by-law officer the homeowner would have to remove or bring up to code.

There have been no complaints.

Change of home ownership for Type 2 suites has become an issue. The seller might not tell the new owner that they need to keep registered. This has led the municipality to send the notice of renewal addressed to the 'current owner'.

Advice based on Ms. Jones' experience:

1. It would have been helpful to have a unified voice from Council in the first year - workshops with Council assisted with clarifying the objectives to be achieved
2. Backgrounders were sent with survey and newspaper ads were used to inform the public
3. Ipsos Reid poll – newspaper ads used to advise residents beforehand – the public appeared well informed in advance of the poll.
4. Useful for Fire Department to be aware of what residences have suites.
5. Hasn't changed the neighbourhood because those suites were already there

(View Royal Brochure and letters to homeowners are attached).

Guest Speaker: Brian Sikstrom, Senior Planner at the City of Victoria

Mr. Sikstrom told the Committee that Victoria has had a long history of suites. Currently, there are 4,000 legal suites. Victoria is one of the densest cities in Canada.

Mr. Sikstrom spoke of the many steps that staff took in order to prepare policy for possible changes. Council's main concern was that they didn't want to go ahead and make changes without the support of the neighbourhood associations. (65% of whom had concerns).

Action taken to deal with the neighbourhood concerns: focus group meetings; public meetings; Meetings were also held with realtors and neighbourhood associations to discuss concerns that there would be demolitions of existing houses replaced with new houses with suites.

It was suggested that a pilot project might work for Oak Bay the way that it had worked in Victoria in the Gonzales neighbourhood. The Gonzales neighbourhood had specifically requested that the secondary suites be allowed in their area.

The following documents provided by Mr. Sikstrom are attached:

- Communication Plan for the Expansion of Secondary Suite Policy in the City of Victoria
- the Executive Summary of the Urban Aspects Report on the City of Victoria's Secondary Suite

Policy- June 2006

- Secondary Suite Policy Expansion Discussion Summary Meeting Notes (February, 2007)
- Changes to Secondary Suites Regulations- Eighteen Month Review (January, 2009)
- Secondary Suites Information Package

In the brief discussion that followed, it was to be noted that Ms. Jones said: “Older people want to stay in their homes, but they don't want to be alone in their homes”. A secondary suite can provide the desired security for those living alone.

Mr. Thomassen will follow-up with Mr. Sikstrom regarding why the City of Victoria does not require owner occupancy as a condition for secondary suites?

Meeting adjourned at 7:16pm

Pam Copley and John Herbert send their regrets for the next meeting.

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 4, 2009 at 5:30pm