

**Minutes of the
Secondary Suite Review Committee
Tuesday June 2, 2009
Oak Bay Municipal Hall Council Chambers**

Meeting called to order at 5:35pm

Attended by: Nils Jensen (Chair), Pam Copley, John Herbert, Mayor Causton (ex-officio member),
Tony Sharp, David Blades

Roy Thomassen (staff- non-voting)

Lise-Lotte Loomer (secretary- non-voting)

Regrets: Colin Crisp

Guest Speaker

John Farquarson, Chair of the Steering Committee of the Gonzales Neighbourhood Community Plan

Gonzales is the first neighbourhood to complete such a plan which has now been in place for seven years. Over the course of 2 ½ years, the group worked through a process in the community that started with a vision statement to facilitate a community dialogue which reflected the shared values of the neighbourhood and the values which they want to see shape decisions over the next 20-30 years. It took a lot of time and hundreds of people were involved. With time came buy-in and it made the implementation phase easier.

There were four parts to this document:

1. Enhance the built and natural overall environment

After calculating that within the neighbourhood, there is 6-8 acres of asphalt, and in keeping with the above statement, they decided to relax their on-site parking requirement. In Mr. Farquarson's opinion, this also helps with traffic calming.

2. Reinforce and maintain social stability

They liked the diversity in the neighbourhood where there is a wide enough range of housing that one can be born and die in Gonzales and have the kind of housing that meets one's needs at various stages of life.

Secondary suites form part of the housing stock. This means that there are options for elderly people and students. It has allowed younger families to help realize their goal of owning their first home because they can have a mortgage helper.

3. Maintain single family character of neighbourhood

It was important to maintain the current look and it has been possible to incorporate secondary suites without changing the overall look of the neighbourhood

4. Alternative transportation and traffic calming

In the context of other values, secondary suites are a means to an end with the tradeoffs being a few more cars on the street.

Committee members asked Mr. Farquarson questions. A summary of the discussion follows:

Victoria's policy is the same as Oak Bay's, it is a complaint based system. An incentive for people to declare their suite was to remove roadblocks: remove the requirement to have off street parking.

In starting with the values (which took the first few months of the process), it meant that they were looking 10 years in the future as opposed to planning blind which would have resulted in a reactive plan.

Secondary Suites must comply with the building code.

The two major changes were: no requirement for off street parking and suites can be in any building no matter when it was built.

Secondary Suites have allowed the neighbourhood to realize their vision of a single family look.

Anecdotally, Mr. Farquarson has noticed no difference in litter, level of noise or blocked streets

Homes with secondary suites are owner occupied.

The noise issue is self-regulating between both parties sharing the same house.

When the committee started they were aware of the regional growth strategy. Oak Bay, who signed on to commit to 5% additional housing by 2020, has already gone a long way to achieving this goal through developments such as Carleton House and Marion Gardens.

Councillor Jensen thanked Mr. Farquarson for his presentation.

LGMA Questions

The following are the questions that were developed for the 5 questions to send to the LGMA

- 1.) What has your municipality done regarding secondary suites?
- 2.) What issues have arisen, either as a result of introducing a policy allowing suites or deciding against it?
 - in the planning process
 - implementation or not implementing
- 3.) How do you regulate secondary suites, new and existing and at what cost?
- 4.) Have you created incentives to declare existing suites and if so what are they?

5.) What changes to the community have you seen (in terms of diversity and the demographics) and what happened that you did not expect would happen?

6.) Since the implementation of a policy allowing secondary suites, how many suites have been installed? What metrics are you using to evaluate the current situation with regard to allowing secondary suites?

Media release

Depending on how the release is received, it will be decided at a later date if there will be an ad placed in the Oak Bay News.

Tom Croft, President of the Oak Bay Community Association has agreed to consider making a presentation to the Committee at the August meeting or early fall. He will be meeting with the directors on Monday to discuss.

Interim Report to Council

This will comprise of: what the committee has done to date; themes arising from the community consultations, and attached minutes. Deadline: June 17, report needs to be in to the office.

Roy will circulate dates for an August meeting.

Public Presentations

Tom Croft, President of the Oak Bay Community Association,
Mr. Croft will let the Committee know when they can make a presentation.

Robert Ross

Mr. Ross expressed his concern about parking. He lives in the Carnarvon area.

Lesley Watson

Ms. Watson expressed that she was happy to see Mr. Farquarson's presentation and stressed the need for empirical data from jurisdictions that have more experience, some jurisdictions in Ontario have 15 years experience.

Ms. Watson had done some research about costs in answer to the concern raised at the second community consultation about the community paying for the additional costs of municipal services.

Roy will contact the BC Assessment Authority with Tony Sharp's assistance to research these numbers further.

John Neal

Mr. Neal appreciated the message that Mr. Farquarson spoke about regarding obtaining good data and time taken to get a vision statement from the Gonzales neighbourhood.

Micheal Yakubowich

Mr. Yakubowich spoke about his family's decision to move to Oak Bay as a quality of life decision and

how much he loved his neighbourhood. In his opinion, illegal suites are very discreet with neighbours “working it out”; a change in policy won't control existing illegal suites.

David Blades spoke about the question of incentives as being really integral to the issue. His residual concern is that currently suites can be dangerous and the safety of tenants, many of whom are students, is at risk if illegal suites are not regulated with safety in mind.

John Lamka

Mr. Lamka spoke about the ambiance of Oak Bay.

Kevin Kotorynsky

Mr. Kotorynsky spoke about his observation that coming from North Vancouver where secondary suites were allowed, there were extra sets of eyes in the neighbourhood when one went away on holiday thus contributing to an extra sense of security. He liked the idea of leading with community values and taking the time to “get it right”.

Cecilia van Shaka

Ms. van Shaka, a resident since 1976, shared her experience about the dangers of her current parking situation with the secondary suites and extra cars and therefore limited line of sight coming out of her driveway. She is concerned about secondary suites.

Minutes from April 7 and April 17, 2009

The minutes will be considered approved unless there are any minor edits that the committee should e-mail to Lise-Lotte Loomer for final change.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held in August and possible dates will be circulated by Roy Thomassen.

Meeting adjourned 6:45pm

Lise-Lotte's suggested wording for your letter:

To the Managers of BC Towns and Cities,

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with our committee on secondary suites. We are currently in the process of reviewing our policy which allows two boarders but not a separate suite in a single family dwelling. A questionnaire has been sent out and we are awaiting the returns. There is a great deal of interest from our community on the issue of secondary suites as evidenced by the turnout at our two community consultations (small group discussion), our seven meetings since January, and the return rate of our survey thus far.

We would appreciate hearing from you whether your municipality has adopted a policy allowing secondary suites or whether it has rejected such a policy.

Your sincerely,

Oak Bay's Review Committee on Secondary Suites

Members: Councillor Nils Jensen (Chair), Councillor Pam Copley, Councillor John Herbert, Mayor
Causton (ex-officio member), Tony Sharp, David Blades and Colin Crisp