



## NIAGARA REGIONAL HOUSING

Campbell East, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
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### Minutes

#### NIAGARA REGIONAL HOUSING Board of Directors Meeting

**#146 – 2015**

NRH Boardroom  
Campbell East, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
2201 St. David's Road  
Thorold, ON

October 30, 2015 – 9:00 A.M.

#### Attendees

#### Directors:

Shirley Cordiner, Chair  
Public-at-Large, Welland

Henry D'Angela, Vice-Chair  
Councillor, Thorold

Karen Blackley, Secretary  
Stakeholder, Thorold

Patrick O'Neill, Treasurer  
Stakeholder,  
Niagara-on-the-Lake

Linda Allen  
Tenant, St. Catharines

Barbara Carroll  
Public-at-Large, St. Catharines

Ken Goka  
Stakeholder, Welland

Paul Grenier,  
Councillor, 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:

S. Cordiner, H. D'Angela, J. Hyatt, J. Osczytko,  
K Goka, , A. Petrowski, K. Blackley P. O'Neill,  
B. Carroll, L. Allen, S. Volpatti till 11:50 A.M.  
K. Kendrick till 11:05 A.M.

Regrets: W. Sendzik, P. Grenier

NRH Staff: E. Balmain, W. Thompson, D. Woiceshyn,  
V. Amato,

Regional Staff: Adrienne Jugley, Interim Commissioner Community  
and Social Services,  
Tracey Frena, Program Financial Analyst  
Frank Marccella, Business Consultant &  
Dan Pilon, AD Performance and Business for item 3

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 9:00 A.M.

#### 1. Adoption of Agenda/Declaration of Conflict

A revised agenda was provided for approval.

Add: Discontinue Property Tax for NRH Public Housing units; and,  
Thank You Letter to Katherine Chislett under Other Business.

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

***That the agenda be ADOPTED as amended.***

CARRIED

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

## 2. Approval of Minutes

### 2.1. Minutes of the October 2, 2015 Meeting

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

***That the minutes of the October 30, 2015 meeting be ADOPTED.***

CARRIED

### 2.2. Business Arising

There was no business arising.

## 3. Update on Social Housing Alternate Service Delivery Review (ASD) CWCD-156-2015

Frank Marcella and Dan Pilon advised that the Region will be hiring a Business Transaction Advisor to oversee the ASD project in January 2016. It will look at the current NRH structure and the best way to manage assets and deliver programs to the public.

Phase 1 is budgeted for \$75,000, and an additional \$150,000 has been budgeted for Phases 2 and 3.

The Board asked if they would be reviewing past reports ie. the Three Program Review commissioned by the Board and performed by KPMG. This report compared the owned Public Housing units, with Co-op and Non-Profit and Rent Supplement programs, finding that owning units was most economical over the long run. M. Marcella advised that they would review past reports.

The CEO requested that they also focus on End of Operating Agreements (EOA); EOA's are a national issue. When Social Housing Provider's (Section 95 Providers) received government funding for development, it was on the condition that they offer a percentage of units to RGI tenants for a specified number of years. These agreements will all expire over the next several years; the providers may decide to sell or completely drop all RGI units, thereby reducing available RGI units across Niagara which will affect Niagara's ability to meet legislated service level standards. M. Marcella will add this to the review.

The majority of Directors expressed frustration that the Board and staff must spend significant amounts of time on regional projects (EFMS, Value for Money, Alternative Service Delivery, Corporation Structure Review) instead of proactively attending to the business of housing.

Question was asked if the Board will receive reports as housing legislation is generally not well understood. Directors were advised that the consultant may engage the Board if he or she wishes to do so.

***Staff was directed to track time spent on ASD.***

Action by: E. Balmain

#### 4. Staff Reports

##### 4.1. 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2015 Report to Board and Council – Report 15-146-4.1.

***Moved by K. Blackley  
Seconded by P. O'Neill***

***That Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors APPROVE the 2016 Third Quarter Report.***

CARRIED

##### *Waitlist page*

Directors asked staff if the waiting list could be illustrated in dial format. The CEO advised that:

- the non-senior waitlist is affected more by the region's economic health; when factories close, or when the tourist season slows down, the waiting goes up
- the senior waitlist represents the increase in that demographic and those who had no or insufficient pensions to sustain themselves in retirement
- the market rent section of the waiting list is held for Co-ops, Non-Profits and more recently for some of the newly developed owned units at Broadoak and Jubilee in Niagara Falls. They do not fall under the 100% RGI legislation. These two developments are self sustaining and do not receive funding from the tax levy.

##### 4.2. Impact of Zero increase to 2016 Operating Budget Slide Show Presentation – 15-146-4.2.

The CEO narrated a slide show presentation on the budget. The 2014 actuals have been added to the budget spreadsheet as requested. The biggest increase is the legislated increase to the Housing Provider subsidies.

The Rent Supplement line was increased to offset the loss of 34 RGI Social Housing units due to EOA of a Pelham Housing Provider. EOA's will have a significant effect on NRH as hundreds of Social Housing units will be lost in coming years. NRH staff are working on a mitigation strategy. OMSSA and ONPHA are also looking at this issue.

Options to achieve zero increase; decreases can only be made to non-legislated lines:

*Discontinue Tenant Supports – ie. Eviction Prevention Program*

NRH staff assist tenants having social problems and mental health issues to help them keep their tenancies. Appropriate partner agencies are called in to assist if the tenant will accept their help ie. Community Services, Canadian Mental Health. The number of complex cases due to mental health issues is on the rise. If these tenants can remain housed with supports it takes the burden off Health Care, Policing and Shelter Systems.

- Aligns with Ministry priority to support and implement eviction prevention strategies.
- Supports Region's 10-year Housing & Homelessness Plan goal: Help People find and retain their home.

*Rent Supplement (End of Operating Agreement Support)*

Tenants living in Federal Housing Provider communities whose provider agreements are coming to an end will lose their RGI assistance and their rent will go to market, even though their income has not increased. This will add pressure to the waiting list.

*Reduction to Utility Line*

Although NRH has no control over tenant usage, other than educating tenants on how to conserve, NRH has installed many energy efficient upgrades to buildings which have resulted in reduced utility costs of \$150,000 even though utility prices are increasing. If we have a mild winter decreased funding to get to 0 may be sufficient.

*Reduced Taxes*

NRH pays just under \$5 m in property taxes each year. The final budget's current calculation includes a 2% increase over the current year tax rate multiplied by the 2016 assessed value. Under the 0 based budget a minor adjustment to the Regional portion was made to only a 1.5% increase.

*Staffing*

The CEO was asked if staffing levels could be reduced. She advised that NRH has taken on many additional housing programs since 2002. Once program funding ended, follow up has been absorbed into existing staff. Additionally, management duties have been absorbed by existing management staff. In fact, the number of senior managers was decreased a few years ago to make additional funds available to add front line staff. In 2014, NRH restructured the Housing Operations Division decreasing middle management by 2 to allow for 3 additional staff to support property administration. NRH staff is stretched to the limit for the services it provides.

Residential day-to-day maintenance and capital jobs are very different from facilities. NRH staff may take 100's of calls before the dollar value of work orders equals 1 facilities job.

Staff was advised that a slide indicating present number of FTE's and temps vs wages would be helpful.

*Moved by B. Carroll  
Seconded by J. Hyatt*

***That the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors APPROVE the proposed 2016 Operating Budget as presented.***

Upon a recorded vote being requested, the Directors voted as follows:

Voting FOR the motion (10): H. D'Angela, J. Hyatt, J. Osczytko, K Goka, K. Blackley, P. O'Neill, B. Carroll, L. Allen, K. Kendrick, S. Volpatti.

Voting AGAINST the motion (1): A. Petrowski.

Upon the recorded vote being taken, the Chair declared the motion,

**CARRIED**

4.3. Customer Complaint Process – Report 15-146-4.3.

The Customer Complaint Process was distributed and reviewed with Directors.

*Moved by K. Blackley  
Seconded by J. Hyatt*

***That Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors RECEIVE, report 15-146-4.3. Customer Complaint Process for information.***

**CARRIED**

A lengthy discussion ensued.

Staff advised that part of the Community Program Coordinators (CPC's) job is to mediate, complaint resolution process between tenants within reason. If warring tenants cannot resolve issues, both can be elevated to the Landlord and Tenant Board for a ruling. Staff may call in police, legal aid, to assist.

Additionally, there are several avenues by which tenants may bring items to staff attention from suggestion boxes, up to and including, attending Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) meetings. TAG meetings are held quarterly at various locations throughout the region all tenants are encouraged to attend.

Kelly Kendrick left the meeting at 11:05 A.M.

## 5. New Business

5.1. There was no new business

## 6. General Manager's Report

### 6.1. Financial Statements as at September 30, 2015 - Report 15-146-6.1.

Financial statements were distributed.

*Moved by P. O'Neill  
Seconded by J. Hyatt*

***That the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors RECEIVE the financial statements as at September 30, 2015.***

CARRIED

#### 6.1.a

*Moved by A. Petrowski  
Seconded by J. Hyatt*

***That the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors APPROVE any surplus realized by NRH in 2015, stay with NRH for future purposes, to be determined by the Board.***

CARRIED

### 6.2 Updated Presentation Dates to Area Councils – 15-146-6.2

The presentation date for Port Colborne changed since the package was sent out; a new chart was distributed.

*Moved by H. D'Angela  
Seconded by J. Osczytko*

***That the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors RECEIVE the updated Presentation Dates to Area Councils for information.***

CARRIED

### 6.3. Transfer of Assets from Open Door Concepts to Gateway

At the June 26, 2015 meeting staff brought forward a report recommending that it be taken to PHSS and Council before going to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing (MMAH) it recommended:

***That the Niagara Regional Housing Board RECOMMENDS to Public Health & Social Services Committee (PHSS), Regional Council, and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing (MMAH) that:***

- 1. The assets of Open Doors Concepts Welland Inc. (Open Doors) are transferred to Gateway Residential and Community Support Services of Niagara Inc. (Gateway);*

2. *Once transferred, Gateway is to be deemed a prescribed housing provider and Special Needs Housing Provider under the Housing Services Act 2011 (HSA); and,*
3. *MMAH is requested to seek consent from Open Doors' mortgagee (Royal Bank) to allow Gateway to assume the mortgage on 60 King Street West, Welland.*

After the June meeting, in discussions with the Commissioner of Community Services, Niagara Region's Clerk's and Legal Departments it was determined that this report did not require Council approval.

*Moved by B. Carroll  
Seconded by J. Hyatt*

***That the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors APPROVES the three recommendations in report 15-143-3.1., Transfer of Assets of Open Doors Concepts Welland Inc. to Gateway Residential and Community Support Services of Niagara Inc. and that it be FORWARDED directly to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval.***

CARRIED

## 7. Closed Session

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

*That the NRH Board of Directors MOVE INTO Closed Session to receive Information of a confidential nature regarding security of the property of the municipality or local board re: Insurance Renewal*

CARRIED

S. Volpatti left the meeting at 11:50 A.M.

*Moved by A. Petrowski  
Seconded by J. Osczypko*

***The NRH Board of Directors RISE with report.***

CARRIED

*Moved by P. O'Neill  
Seconded by B. Carroll*

***That the NRH Board of Directors APPROVE the recommendation in IC 15-146-7.1. Insurance Renewal November 1, 2015 to November 1, 2016.***

CARRIED

Staff was directed to email the total value of insurable properties.

Action by: E. Balmain

## 8. Committee Reports

### 8.1. Appeals Hearings

Minutes of the September 29, 2015 hearings were provided for information.

*Moved by H. D'Angela  
Seconded by P. O'Neill*

***THAT the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors RECEIVE the minutes of the September 29, 2015 Appeal Hearings for information.***

**CARRIED**

### 8.2. Executive Committee

Executive Committee Minutes of the October 19, 2015 meeting were distributed.

Attention was called to page 4, item 6.2. of the Executive Committee minutes of October 19, 2015. Regarding Minutes of the June 26, 2015 Board of Directors meeting item 10.1 re: allegations of tenant's fraudulent reporting of income:

The paragraph could be taken out of context by readers; would like to clarify in the minutes and repost to website. Paragraph should read:

These tenants ~~will be~~ *were* given 12 months' notice ~~to move~~ ***that they cease to qualify for RGI.*** The board will be advised before ~~the new~~ letters are sent to these tenants.

Moved by P. O'Neill  
Seconded by A. Petrowski

***THAT the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors APPROVE amendment of the June 26, 2015 minutes to accurately reflect what was said.***

**CARRIED**

## 9. For Information

### 9.1. Action Items from Previous Meetings

- 9.2. CL 16-2015, dated October 22, 2015, Letter to Ellen Balmain, from Ralph Walton, Regional Clerk re: NRH Organizational Structure & Eviction Moratorium Motions Memorandum C8340.

The above noted memorandum was distributed.



## 9.2.1. Motion 1 re: NRH Organizational Structure

There was some discussion about how this motion was taken to Council and that it was not provided to the Board for consideration or input in advance. At the end of the October 2, 2015 Board meeting, P. Grenier advised that he would be tabling a motion at the October 22 Council meeting with the goal of clarifying/ensuring NRH's authority on matters and ability to function as a corporation with a governing Board of Directors.

Discussion regarding the motion included:

- The Board did not have the opportunity to review or discuss the proposed motion before it went to council.
- The current Board composition consists of Directors well educated in the area they are governing.
- Regional Councillors do not have a comprehensive understanding of complex housing issues and legislation; they are not expected to which is why the Board was originally designed as it is
- Current structure balances political process with stakeholder responsibility
- 12 years offers no refreshing
- Takes years to gain understanding; loss of continuity if the whole Board changes every four years.

*Moved by A. Petrowski*

*Seconded by J. Hyatt*

***That the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors REQUEST that the draft report regarding NRH Organizational Structure be provided to the NRH Board before the final report is presented to Council.***

*CARRIED*

## 9.2.2. Motion 2 re: Moratorium on Market Rent Tenant Evictions

Highlights of the discussion:

The CEO provided status of Market Rent tenants to date:

In all 175 letters went out

55	have had RGI status reinstated
27	have given notice that they are moving; some have purchased their own homes
3	Reviewed and not eligible
34	submitted requested information; pending - waiting for review
6	overhoused – too many bedrooms for the number of occupants and <b>refused offer of appropriate size unit</b> – Have agreed to go back on the transfer list
3	over the income limit one by \$10,000
45	still have not responded, refuse to sign for couriered packages or refusing to answer door. Staff will be attempting to contact these tenants. Possible reasons for not responding:

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May not understand language</li><li>• May not have the ability to complete income and assets review</li><li>• Do not want to move to appropriate size unit</li><li>• Have additional occupants in the unit unknown to NRH</li><li>• Hiding income – well over the income limit</li></ul> |
|--|

Staff is also working with tenants who for medical reasons might be unable to move.

Other issues:

- Cannot afford 1<sup>st</sup> and last months' rent
- Cannot find apartment they can afford because their income is just over the legislated Household Income Limits (HILS)
- Why is NRH now enforcing this legislation
  - In the past it was thought that mixing market and RGI tenants would make for healthier communities but the ratio is so low 175 to 2636 there is virtually no difference.
  - Cannot justify to the households on the waiting list who are in dire need.
  - Other Local Housing Corporations across the Province are enforcing this and requiring households to move that do not qualify for RGI. Sudbury, Timiskaming and Stratford are examples.

Staff to send link to legislation.

Action by: E. Balmain

To date no one has been evicted, no one will be evicted before the next meeting. It was suggested that a more fulsome analysis could be provided once review of the 34 households pending have been completed and the 45 households who did not respond have been contacted.

*Moved by P. O'Neill*

*Seconded by K. Blackley*

***That the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors DEFER decision on eviction moratorium to the November meeting.***

*CARRIED*

## 10. Other Business

### 10.1. Discontinue Property Tax for NRH Public Housing units

Property tax issue was reviewed by the Board in early 2014. At that time it was deferred for 1 year due to elections.

*Moved by H. D'Angela*

*Seconded by A. Petrowski*

***That the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors APPROVE a motion being brought forward to Council requesting the elimination of municipal property tax on NRH units.***

CARRIED

10.2 Thank You Letter to Katherine Chislett

*Moved by H. D'Angela  
Seconded by K. Blackley*

***That the Niagara Regional Housing Board of Directors APPROVE letter of appreciation being sent to Katherine Chislett.***

CARRIED

11. Next Meeting

Friday, November 27 at 9:00 A.M.  
NRH Board Room  
Campbell East, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way  
Thorold

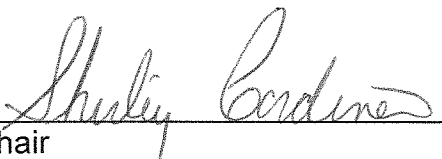
12. Adjournment

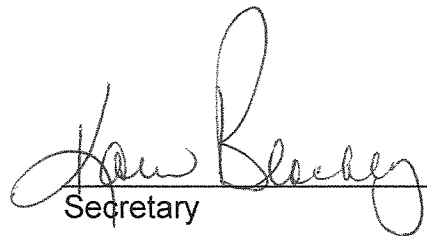
***Motion to ADJOURN at 1:10 P.M.***

*Moved by B. Carroll  
Seconded by J. Osczytko*

CARRIED

Minutes Approved:

  
Chair

  
Secretary