

Minutes
High Park Tenants Association (HPTA) Special Meeting
Wednesday, June 29, 2016
Lobby of 255 Glenlake Avenue, 7 pm

Executive members in attendance: Drew Harvie, Jana Orac, Fred Dus, Marc Senderowitz, Annick MacAskill (Barbi Lazarus)

61 people in total attended the meeting according to the attendance sheet (there may have been more who did not sign in)

1. Introductions

Drew Harvie introduces himself as the acting President of the HPTA. He thanks the residents in attendance for coming and presents the agenda for the Special Meeting.

2. Review Recent Developments at HPTA

Drew Harvie presents the context of the recent changes in the HPTA:

The previous executive of HPTA resigned en masse earlier this year. Back in October, 2015, Julie Monpierre resigned from the HPTA. A woman who wishes to remain anonymous was elected First Vice President at this time. Another AGM was scheduled for January. In January the meeting was held. On March 2, another meeting was held with three members, where there were more resignations. On April 20, there was another meeting of the Executive, at which the aforementioned First Vice President resigned, and announced that she was dissolving the HPTA. Drew was concerned that this meant there would be no tenant representation at any future AGI Landlord and Tenant Board meetings, so he stepped up as acting President to stop the dissolution. As a result, the HPTA was not dissolved and was able to maintain control of its bank account. Since then, Drew has appointed other Executive Members.

3. Introduce new Executive

Drew Harvie presents the new Executive Members, Jana Orac (Vice-President), Fred Dus (Second Vice-President), Marc Senderowitz (Treasurer), and Annick MacAskill (Secretary). Drew also presents Barbi Lazarus, who while not a member of the Executive, provides support by maintaining the HPTA's web presence and handling communications. Drew asks for approval for the Executive so that they might stay in place until January. Angie (Angela) Knowles moves to accept the new Executive. Tom (Thomas) Dempsey seconds the motion. The vote to approve is unanimous.

4. Discuss amendments to the Constitution

Drew Harvie informs those in attendance that the previous version of the Constitution was put together in 2010. There had never been another version approved until this year. Some

amendments have been made to make the Constitution more effective. The changes made have been mostly organizational.

The first change was that the primary objective of the HPTA was defined as follows: “HPTA’s primary focus will be to challenge management applications for Above Guideline Increases (AGIs) at the Landlord and Tenant Board.” Drew adds that these objectives are open to being changed at any time.

Liana Mori objects, stating that the HPTA should not just focus on AGIs. She adds that previously, this was not the only objective of the HPTA. Drew answers that this will be discussed further later in the meeting.

Drew continues to outline the amendments to the Constitution. The date indicated for the end of the HPTA’s fiscal year has been changed in Article 4 to the 31st of December from the 31st of August. As a result, the date of the AGM has also been changed, and will now be held in January in lieu of September. The HPTA Executive will send out notices by digital means and post announcements on the notice boards in HPTA buildings in order to inform residents of the AGM.

In Article 11, the office of Membership Secretary has been removed from the HPTA Executive, to clarify the inconsistency of the previous constitution which variously shows five or six Executive Officers. In addition, Barbi Lazarus is currently acting as a de facto Membership Secretary.

In Article 13, the quorum for Executive meetings has been changed from five members of the Executive to three members, including two Officers. Also in Article 13, the spending limit for unauthorized non-routine expenditures has been increased from \$50 to \$100.

A clause (c) has been added to Article 18 indicating that “[a]ny motion to wind-up or dissolve HPTA will be considered an extraordinary amendment to the Constitution and must be presented as a special resolution to be adopted by a minimum 60% vote of the members at a Special Meeting or AGM.”

Article 21 indicates that any prior Constitutions will be null and void with the passing of this Constitution.

Questions and Comments

Cael Cohen picks up on Liana’s comment, suggesting that more wording be added to Article 3 (Objectives) of the Constitution. Drew reads the entirety of Article 3, which is found satisfactory.

Kevin Sambrano asks if 299 Glenlake is included in the HPTA. Drew answers that it is.

Kevin Sambrano moves to accept the new constitution. Cael Cohen seconds. The vote to approve is unanimous.

5. Review current Minto and Vertica AGI applications

Drew presents the information he has gathered on the Minto and Vertica AGI applications for 2016.

Minto put in an application on October 14, 2015 for an AGI for its 111 Pacific Avenue, 255 Glenlake Avenue, and 66 Oakmont Road buildings. 565 total units were included in the application out of a possible 750. The others were not included for various reasons, such as new tenants. In its application, Minto claimed over two million dollars' worth of capital expenditures (\$2 241 176). On top of the 2% guideline increase for 2016, Minto requested an additional 1.75% for a total of a 3.75% increase. If passed, this increase would apply to all rents dating back to January 15, 2016. The application has gone to the Landlord and Tenant Board, though a date for a hearing has yet to be set. Drew thinks the hearing is likely to occur in September.

Vertica East put in an application on December 9, 2015 for an AGI for its 35 High Park Avenue, 65 High Park Avenue, 95 High Park Avenue, and 66 Pacific Avenue buildings. Only 305 units from these buildings were included in the application out of a possible 968. Vertica has not given a reason for why the other units were not included. Kevin Sambrano suggests that management can pass on AGIs to whomever they choose, and that they might prefer to apply for AGIs for units whose tenants have been there longer. The reasons given by Vertica for its AGI application are various expenditures, including elevators. A resident asks if those were not the same reasons given previously for past AGI applications. Drew answers that it will be part of the HPTA's work to investigate the invoices provided in the application. Vertica has requested an AGI of 1.4%, bringing the total proposed increase to 3.4%. If Vertica's application is successful, it will affect rents dating back to April 15, 2016. Drew expects a hearing will be held in November. A resident asks if these expenses are not planned for in the rent (before increases). Liana replies that the landlord has the right to apply for AGIs.

Vertica West has applied for a 1% AGI this year for its two buildings. According to Vertica, this is the remainder of a 3.7% AGI application from last year. They were awarded 2.7% of their AGI last year, so they are applying for the remaining 1% this year. Drew says that one tenant from this building has told him that only one Vertica West AGI was contested successfully in the past eight years.

Kevin Sambrano interjects that this is inaccurate, that in his experience, the HPTA has been very successful in reducing AGIs in the past. Drew confirms that this has been his experience, that from 2005 to the present, in 255 Glenlake Avenue, five AGIs have been presented, the HPTA contested each one, and were successful in decreasing the AGI. He adds that there is a very real benefit to fighting AGIs, as this is good tactic for reducing rent.

Kevin Sambrano comments that certain buildings are not as well maintained as 255 Glenlake Avenue, that 77 Quebec Avenue, for example, there are substantial maintenance issues. He says that pointing out these issues is a way to block AGIs.

Drew adds that the HPTA is still waiting on the meeting dates and numbers for the AGIs, but that the HPTA is committed to fighting them. He adds that the requests are not exorbitant given the expenses provided, so it will be a question of the HPTA going through the expenses

thoroughly. The HPTA will be attending the Landlord and Tenant Board meetings and will be contracting a paralegal who has previously represented tenants at the Landlord and Tenant Board. It is a big expense, which is why the HPTA needs donations.

Questions and Comments

Barbi asks whether tenants should be keeping track of maintenance issues to help contest AGIs. Kevin replies that he perhaps misspoke, and that tenants should wait until someone is hired to work with the HPTA. Drew says that it is important to apply pressure, and that maintenance-related issues are indeed a potential way to help the case against AGIs.

There is a question from a resident about whether this kind of rent increase is typical. Drew replies yes, that this is the reason why the HPTA should be focused on the AGIs.

Liana Mori comments that to change the law about AGIs tenants should petition their MPPs.

Cael Cohen asks if tenants can attend Landlord and Tenant Board meetings. Drew replies that tenant attendance at these meetings is encouraged. Another resident asks if tenants should consider writing out statements and sending them along to the meetings. Drew says he is not sure about this option, adding that residents' physical presence at the meetings definitely does help.

6. Survey members about notification preference
and

7. Advise that future notices will be by e-mail, website, bulletin board postings

Drew asks the members in attendance to raise their hands if they do not have an email address. Six people do not have an email address.

Drew says that putting notices in individual mailboxes is both timely and costly, and the HPTA would like to eliminate this method of providing notices. Messages will still be posted on the buildings' notice boards.

Drew asks the members in attendance to raise their hands if they do not have access to the internet. Three people do not have access to the internet.

Drew advises people to check out the website, the notice boards, and to provide their email addresses to the HPTA Executive in order to keep informed of the HPTA's activities and upcoming meetings.

Kevin comments that there are surely people without access to the internet who didn't make it to the meeting and that it should be assumed that the members in attendance without internet represent the overall proportion of residents without internet (i.e., about 10% of all residents). Another resident adds that the URL was hard to find on the notice.

Drew says that the HPTA plans to widen its reach by standing in lobbies around dinner time to collect email addresses.

Barbi comments that the meeting has a very good turn-out. She wonders if this is because of the paper notices that were distributed door-to-door.

Drew asks the members in attendance to raise their hands if they heard of the meeting thanks to these fliers. Virtually everyone came to the meeting because of the flier notices.

8. Request for volunteers and Building Representatives

Drew says that the HPTA is looking for one Building Representative for each of the ten high-rise buildings that make up the HPTA. Drew summarizes the duties of Building Representatives, who are primarily responsible for collecting donations from the other tenants in their building.

Drew informs the tenants that the HPTA's bank has indicated that it is not possible for the HPTA to accept donations electronically.

Cathy Brown asks whether the HPTA has considered knocking on doors to talk to tenants.

John Gell asks for more information about Building Representatives, namely, if there are elections. Drew replies that tenant apathy is a real problem, and he is not concerned about getting so many volunteers that elections would be possible. He says there are plenty of other tasks for volunteers if needed.

Drew asks the members in attendance if any of them have been Building Representatives in the past. Irwin Patterson presents himself, says he has been a Building Representative in the past, and that in his experience it is not too much work.

There is a question about whether there are meetings for Building Representatives. Drew replies that according to the HPTA Constitution, all Building Representatives are part of the HPTA Executive, and can attend meetings and vote on issues.

Someone suggests that there continue to be two Building Representatives per building. Drew replies that this is unnecessary.

9. Request for donations

Drew points out that tenants have already donated tonight to the jar at the front of the lobby. He asks the members in attendance to sign up for the email list and to get involved with HPTA.

(10.) Post-meeting questions and comments

1. A gentleman asks about the fliers that have been put out regarding the old trees in the neighbourhood. Barbi replies that it was she. They will talk after the meeting.

2. Liana Mori clarifies that there are no tax receipts provided for donations to the HPTA. Drew confirms this, but adds that he will send a thank-you note to those who have put their name down on the list of donors.
3. Someone asks if there is a list for volunteers (besides Building Representatives). Drew says he will set one up.
4. Irwin Patterson emphasizes the importance of donations.
5. Simon Barber comments that all Canadian banks use the Interac system for money transfers. Drew thanks Simon for his comment, adding that the HPTA will add this information to the website.
6. Greg Denton from Councillor Sarah Doucette's office presents himself. He says that the Councillor is sorry she couldn't be there, but Greg has come to show her support.
7. Someone asks to whom cheques should be made out. Drew replies that they can be made out to "High Park Tenants Association."
8. There is a question about the recent campaign by Toronto landlords about an "apartment tax," and whether the HPTA took a stance on the issue. Drew replies that the HPTA did not respond as it was in limbo at the time.
9. Kevin Sambrano says thank you to Drew for the meeting. He moves that we adjourn. Catherine Schurter seconds. The vote is unanimous and the meeting is adjourned.