

TORONTO COMMUNITY HOUSING CORPORATION
GOVERNANCE, COMMUNICATIONS AND HUMAN RESOURCES
COMMITTEE MEETING
FEBRUARY 1, 2021

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WRITTEN DEPUTATIONS

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Deputation - Cheryl Duggan
Item 2D - City Council Directions Requiring Board Attention
GCHRC Public Meeting - February 1, 2021

TCHC GCRHC – Feb. 1, 2021 (2D – 2021 GCHRC Work Plan)

19 – CC5.2 – TCHC's Medical and Safety at Risk Priority Transfer Process For Tenants

Official Status - Work Completed

Unofficially I believe this needs some tweaking as per tenant discussions with TCHC's Confronting Anti-Black Racism team. The Medical and Safety at Risk Priority Transfer Process should include an element of agency on the part of the tenant. At no point should a tenant have to make a choice between a rock and a hard place. Leaving the space of domestic violence in order to reside in a space of excessive community violence is unfathomable. Give the tenants on the Safety at Risk Priority list the right to choose three communities with appropriately sized units. Then place them in one of those communities they chose. If they decline a unit in a community of their choice then obviously the priority wasn't that great to begin with and TCHC can proceed to offer units to the next tenant/s on the priority list. There were concerns raised in the CABR discussions that TCHC was using the Safety At Risk Transfer Process to fill units in undesirable high crime locations.

Deputation - Cheryl Duggan
Item 3 - Action Item List - Public
GCHRC Public Meeting - February 1, 2021

TCHC GCHRC – Feb. 1, 2021 – (Item 3 - GCHRC Action Item List)

Open Meeting Requirements

According to the City of Toronto website “The City takes a number of steps to ensure the highest degree of openness and transparency...” Given that explanation and my recent experience I would argue that the process for Open Meeting Requirements extend well beyond what is broadly alluded to under the Description section of this GCHRC chart provided.

Let's use this meeting as an example. Twenty minutes to discuss Governance, Communication, and Human Resources. On what planet do you believe that is enough time to discuss one of these issues? Never mind all three.

For example:

Governance – There is a recruitment process going on to replace our CEO, as well as other board positions. Including two Tenant Board seats. How is the process moving along? How many people have applied for each position (CEO position, tenant board member, public board member)? What step of the process are they in? What is the time frame for final decisions? Just because this process is handled by the City doesn't mean that TCHC shouldn't be aware of what stage they're at and accompanying deadlines.

Communications – During this pandemic I would like to know what TCHC's plans are to combat the lack of preventative measures that occur in our TCHC communities. Communications should be front line in this war on COVID. (Sending out notices to cleaning staff not to clean high touch areas with dirty rags would be a prime example.)

Beside that what are staff instructed to do if they witness clear COVID violations (i.e..someone not wearing a mask or four people crammed into one elevator?)

On the other hand can't communications open up a tenant leader communication channel. We are so isolated right now. Any opportunity to talk to other TCHC tenants would be appreciated.

Now when it comes to dealing with communication among committee and board members. Why do TCHC board and committee members spend so much time reading through reports during meetings? That leads me to believe that there are members that may not otherwise be performing their due diligence. If there are concerns about board or committee members not being prepared for meetings facilitating that lack of preparation is not an appropriate tactic. Discipline is.

Is there a reason that TCHC committee and board members can't forward questions or comments to those submitting reports to meetings prior to said meetings? That way those issues could be at an advanced stage of discussion prior to and post board/committee meetings.

Human Resources What new hires have taken place? How many staff have left? Did they resign or were they “let go”?

Are the new HR resources practices and protocols having the desired impact? When will a new staff survey be designed and distributed?

As you can see that's far more representative of what should be addressed within the GCHRC meeting with the current agenda framing and/or following these categorizations.

Now we can discuss the actual posting of the agenda to TCHC's website. During one of the two Tenants First, city hosted, virtual discussions about the expectations of tenant board members Linda Jackson (a current TCHC board member) stated that TCHC does its best to post the agendas ten days prior to a committee or board meeting. Now is that ten regular days or ten business days? Otherwise, that's far from the reality of my experience as a TCHC tenant advocate and deputant.

Let's take this meeting as an example. The agenda was not posted until Tuesday, January 26th, 2021. That's six days before the actual meeting. Now as a tenant advocate and deputant I don't appreciate the deadline of noon Friday, January 29th, 2021 as the cut off time for me to declare that I plan to verbally depute. Alternatively, if I planned to just submit written deputations those would have been due by the Friday noon deadline as well. (Just in case you're under the impression that I have nothing better to do than wait for TCHC to post agendas, during the last week I have had three food delivery days, with overlapping distribution days, for the food bank I co-ordinate for the seniors and vulnerable tenants in my building. If its a single food item I do door to door drop off. If it's a multi-item food delivery I set up in the rec room.)

Recently I worked together with Sonia Fong, the Board secretary, to have written deputations submitted late as I otherwise could not meet the deadline of submitting on a Friday for a Monday morning Tenant Services Committee meeting (January 2021). I had hoped to verbally depute on an item at last Monday's TSC meeting but was informed that they were only taking verbal deputations on Item number 4. I was informed that they would not hear my deputation on the Agenda itself. Forgive me for saying so. But if they were still willing to entertain deputations on Item 4 then why not on the Agenda? Especially, when it highlighted that lack of a cohesive comprehensive COVID19 action plan for tenants across the entire portfolio. There has never been a mandate to prevent someone from deputing on the Agenda despite previous attempts by TCHC to limit deputations.

Then there is the fact that once a deputant is finished giving their deputation there are no follow up questions or comments from board or committee members in order to fully understand an issue that a deputant has brought to their attention. Just a click then a dial tone. I've watched City Council meetings. I know that they have made allowances to accommodate this much needed time for clarification. I would rather like to know that I have been a) heard, b) understood, and c) asked what solutions I could envision for moving beyond the issue raised.

Then there is the idea that most organizations have some time allotted at the end of the agenda for Other Business. Never have I seen this on a TCHC committee or board agenda. It may be on the In Camera session agendas. I don't know. But I do know that Other Business does not appear on any TCHC committee or board public agenda. On the odd occasion that TCHC may be doing something right wouldn't you like to hear that? On the odd occasion that someone may have an idea about how to govern, communicate or resource staff more effectively wouldn't you like to hear that as well? Frame it as a positive reinforcement, or a solution channel where tenants/or the general public can offer their real time advice on issues affecting them. Cuz, let's face it. Any issues discussed at this meeting take years from problem, to consultation, to solution. If we could trim some of that time, we trim some of the resistance and some of the expense.

In other words, TCHC needs to look at ways to further examine their Open Meeting Requirements well beyond the definition given and the March 31, 2021 deadline provided.

Deputation - Cheryl Duggan
Item 4 - 2021 Public GCHRC Work Plan
GCHRC Public Meeting - February 1, 2021

TCHC GCHRC – Feb. 1, 2021 – (Item 4 – 2021 Public GCHRC Work Plan)

“City Council Direction Regarding Board Attention” Should that not say “City Council Direction [Requiring] Board Attention.”

Now I also take issue with the concept of City Council directing TCHC on various matters. What would it take to turn TCHC into a self directed corporation. Cuz I'm certain no other “corporation” is directed by outside entities. Besides any initiative that the city finds success with takes years for TCHC to integrate into their policies and/or programs. (Example : Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism unanimously adopted by city council in December 2017 making its appearance on TCHC agendas in 2020.)

The next issue that could use some clarification is the AGM Process. Now I understand that TCHC cant vote in new board members at their AGM's. But, why can't the city and TCHC agree to announce the new board members at the AGM? Given that this years AGM is likely to be virtual it would make sense to try out this new format. In addition, TCHC could put out a press release related to the consolidated event with details about the AGM and introduce the new board members.

Then there are these categories without definitions “Special Items” May I suggest COVID management be listed? That should be something that all three sections (Governance, Communications, and Human Resources) of this committee are accountable for. I can pretty guarantee COVID 19 will be an issue until at least the fourth quarter of 2021 for both TCHC staff and tenants.