



District of Sault Ste. Marie

Social Services Administration Board

- Ontario Works
- Child Care
- Social Housing
- Land Ambulance

SOCIAL HOUSING COMMITTEE

MINUTES For Wednesday, July 14, 2004

Korah Boardroom, Civic Centre 12:00 p.m.

PRESENT: P. Mick L. Madonna J. Curran
CITY STAFF: G. Avery R. Cobean A. McRae
DSSMSSAB STAFF: K. Streich-Poser A. Nanne (notes)

Social Housing Committee Chair, P. Mick, called the meeting to order at 12:22 p.m.

1. Review of the Minutes from the Tuesday, March 23, 2004 Social Housing Committee Meeting.

The minutes were reviewed and accepted by the committee.

2. Sault Ste. Marie Housing Corporation

Tenders update

G. Avery presented the Summary of Tenders to the Social Housing Committee. The information will also be reviewed at the DSSMSSAB Board meeting as information. The summary offers committee members an opportunity to ask questions and to become aware of the SSM Housing tendering process. This procedure is a very large part of the SSM Housing Corporation budget. The majority of tenders are for capital works projects and others are for snow removal, maintenance, and other tasks.

The lowest bid is most often accepted when reviewing bids however the option to make another selection is always available. An alternative tender selection could be made as a result of previous supplier mishaps or poor service. The SHC tries to use local suppliers whenever possible and generally does not advertise outside of the city.

The SSM Housing Corporation has constructed a multi-year capital plan. Flexibility in the plan allows for jobs to be advanced if the budget and funding are available late in the year.

Audit

G. Avery addressed questions regarding the accrual of funds that arose during the 2003 audit. He informed the committee that money that was actually spent in the prior year was reflected in the current financial statements. G. Avery commented that this problem is a result of miscommunication between operational and financial personnel. Invoicing needs to occur in a timelier fashion and will be corrected in the future. A. McRae and G. Avery have already met and are dealing with this matter.

Insurance Renewal process

The Insurance Program Guide and process for renewal were distributed to the committee. This is a preliminary source of information for the committee and G. Avery will have more facts available shortly. He will bring them forward to the Board at that time.

J. Curran inquired about the timing of the next committee meeting since it is not until September. G. Avery responded that this issue would come forward at the full SSM Housing Corporation meeting in August.

3. Sault Ste. Marie Housing Programs (Non-Profits)

Provincial Benchmarking of Housing Providers

R. Cobean distributed information to the committee regarding provincial benchmarking for housing providers. The handouts included a sample of a benchmarking working document.

R. Cobean stated that the Provincial Government is determined to benchmark each of the housing programs. Benchmarking standards in the past were only temporary but the government will now set permanent benchmarks. R. Cobean will be attending a meeting in Sudbury next week to discuss how the benchmarks have been determined.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has been collecting data regarding benchmarking over the past 4 years. This is the first time that the benchmarks have been brought forward to the service managers. There are concerns regarding the data collected and the accuracy of the benchmarks.

Negotiations with the providers should better reflect their ability to sustain themselves with the subsidy provided. J. Curran is concerned about a shortfall in funding and the responsibility of the DSSMSSAB to cover these shortfalls. R. Cobean agreed with J. Curran and feels that this is a warranted concern.

P. Mick asked about the DSSMSSAB's ability to view the contracted private sector accounts. She was informed that we may not have access to this information.

J. Curran asked why the provincial government is legislating benchmarks, while they do not pay our bills. The committee and managers agreed that this could cause a dilemma. The federal government plays a role in this situation as well as they will only deal with the province of Ontario as a whole and not with the forty-seven individual housing service managers.

R. Cobean informed the committee that once the benchmarks are set they couldn't be easily changed. He also commented that benchmarking discrepancies could be a bigger problem on the revenue side rather than the expense side. Once they commit to a certain revenue level the provider will be responsible for making up the shortfall even if the expenses change.

Rent Bank (update)

R. Cobean included the Rent Bank program guide from Nippissing as an example for the committee.

The letter of intent has been signed and returned to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. We still need to sign the actual agreement in order for the funds to be released to the Finance Department. The \$66,000 funds will then flow through the United Way to Community Assistance Trust. The United Way has both the structure and the processes in place to administer the Rent Bank on our behalf.

The Rent Bank is a one-time funding opportunity from the Provincial Government. This program assists tenants in arrears and lacking income. The Rent Bank can provide the funds necessary for one month's rent to those in need. Recipients can access the Rent Bank only once every two years. Over the course of the next year the Provincial Government will collect data and determine if this process should be continued in the future. Reporting requirements may be stringent for this program.

Rent Geared to Income (RGI) Block Funding

The Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program is now being reworked to a different format. In the past, the funds were distributed directly to the SSM Housing Corporation but now it will be distributed in block funding (one lump sum) to the DSSMSSAB. Separate accounting records have been set up for this funding initiative.

There will be a slight funding increase as administration funds are now included in the block funding provided. This amount will help cover fluctuations in the market rent levels however, we will no longer receive increases that we were originally scheduled to obtain.

Status of Liuna and Cara Community Corporation amalgamation

The amalgamation of Liuna and Cara Community has been approved and the lawyers are now putting the paperwork together. They will maintain separate accounts and locations for the next while in order to track their own finances.

Status of request for additional capital funds for Cara Community Corporation

Information has been sent to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing regarding the request for additional capital funds for the Cara Community Corporation. The ministry has responded that they would now like a 5-year plan. John King is currently working with Cara Community to put together a draft for the 5-year plan. The MMAH has also expressed some issues with the mixed tenant status as well as maintenance work and betterments that are scheduled to take place. We will now sit down with the MMAH to review the intended betterments and the reasoning behind the expenditures.

4. Social Housing Services Corporation

NOSDA Representative Nomination (update)

K. Streich-Poser discussed support for D. Edgar as a nominee for the Social Housing Services Corporation. She has been working with D. Edgar to compose and submit his application to NOSDA. It will be distributed to the NOSDA groups and reviewed at the NOSDA September Annual meeting.

L. Madonna asked if a letter from Prince Township would add to his credentials. K. Streich-Poser responded that L. Madonna's participation as a DSSMSSAB Board member and the Reeve of Prince Township will be noted to the NOSDA members.

5. Next Meeting

The next Social Housing Committee meeting will be at Noon on September 23rd

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:22 p.m.