



Minutes of Meeting

Joint Committee Meeting – Charles Street Community – October 23, 2024

Management Members Present: Apostolo Zeno – Director, University Family Housing (UFH), Mike Kaev – Manager, Building Operations & Services, UFH

Tenant Executive (TE) Members Present: Emily Farrar – Chairperson, Tanea Agrawaal – Vice President, Sannah Jabeen – Secretary, Jamiu Abdsalami – Student Group Rep, Mwendwa Kiko – Rent Committee Member, Maryam Owodunni – outgoing President

Absent: Pooya Mamaghani – Treasurer, TE, Juan Franky – Maintenance & Security, TE, Juta Kruusmae – Member at Large, TE, Sam Reimer – Rent Rep, TE

Minutes: Dana Burke – Manager, Admissions & Housing Services, UFH

Tenants' Association

Introduction of new TE members to UFH: Apostolo began introductions of UFH members, starting with himself as Director of UFH, welcoming all to the meeting. Mike introduced himself as Manager, Building Operations & Services of UFH, outlining that he oversees the day to day and overall operations for the two Charles Street West (CSW) buildings including mechanical and electrical systems, etc. Dana introduced herself as Manager, Admissions & Housing Services of UFH and for the purpose of the JCM as the recording secretary who will be responsible for taking meeting minutes and communicating with the JCM group regarding agenda items, and scheduling meetings. The TE is welcome to contact Dana between meetings should they have any questions. Tanea is Vice President of TE. Sannah is Secretary of TE. Mwendwa is a Rent Committee member of TE. Maryam is the outgoing President of TE, explaining that their attendance today was to handover the TE responsibilities and Maryam shared that the TE is looking to collaborate to meet tenant needs. Maryam thanked everyone for their work. Jamiu is Student Group Rep for TE.

Apostolo presented the structure of the JCM, that it typically meets monthly, there is an agenda of discussion topics, but other business may be discussed. Questions can be asked between meetings either by email or an ad hoc meeting may be requested, and TE is encouraged to reach out to Dana as required, the goal is to communicate and be collaborative. The TE's agenda items are typically discussed first, and UFH will follow. Mike presents for building operations and the Assistant Director presents for admissions, eligibility and residence life topics. Currently the Assistant Director role is vacant. Dana may also speak to admissions or housing services. If topics require further discussion, they can be carried forward to a subsequent meeting or action items may be set. In these instances, the JCM will start with those topics before any new topics. JCM minutes are published on the UFH website for transparency.



Transfer of email listserv: Tanea confirmed that the TE is motivated to communicate with tenants and hope to increase engagement, as in the TE's experience many tenants are not aware of the TE or the JCM. The TE will use this means of communication to bring tenant issues and concerns forward and the TE plans to communicate with tenants via newsletters or announcements highlighting building or scheduled management matters, with some frequency, maybe monthly, using the listserv. Tanea asked how the transfer of the listserv from the previous TE members to the new members would occur. Maryam shared that while serving on the TE, that the listserv requires periodic updating, and there were occasions where former tenants responded to listserv messages asking to be removed. Apostolo outlined that when the listserv was requested by the TE, UFH consulted with U of T partners regarding the privacy of tenant emails and it was confirmed that UFH would maintain oversight of the listserv, and one or two TE members would be permitted to use the listserv to communicate with tenants. The challenge of the listserv is that there are monthly move ins and outs at UFH, so the tenant list requires frequent updates. It was established that the tenant list would be updated every three months by UFH, and there is a disclaimer in listserv communications regarding how recipients may unsubscribe if they wish. Apostolo will confirm how the quarterly listserv update occurs and when former tenants are removed. Tanea and Emily were identified as the TE members who would manage the listserv, Apostolo confirmed he will schedule a time with both as there is a document that will need to be reviewed and signed prior to transferring the listserv.

Building heat. This is a recurring issue noted in family housing Facebook (FB) and JCM minutes. It is understood that it is too expensive to replace the existing heating system; however, are requesting to understand the following – What is the current heating system? How is the system set to maintain the minimum 21C requirement? Can the valves be fixed or updated in the units so that tenants have more control over their temperatures, without risk to the full building's heating system? A TE member mentioned there is a way for tenants to do this in some units and they are likely doing it themselves, this might be dangerous, and it might prove useful to engage in the maintenance work to have technicians do this upon request: Tanea outlined that the heating system was turned on October 10 and the weather was warm over the weekend following. There were more than five posts on the TE FB page regarding this matter between Thursday and Sunday, with some tenants recording temperatures of 32C in their units. Each of these posts had 40-50 comments or post engagements, therefore roughly 200 tenants were had publicly expressed discomfort with the condition in their units over this period. The TE would like to understand how the minimum temperature of 21C is maintained. Mike stated that he also had the topic of building heat on the agenda today and Mike shared that turning on the building heat is a regular exercise undertaken by UFH Operations at the beginning and end of the heating season which is September through June for the City of Toronto, and that the "shoulder season" is the time when outside temperatures are unpredictable when seasons are changing. Operations realizes that having the heat on in September is normally not a good idea, and that the building is able to maintain heat later into the year. Operations monitors outdoor temperatures, and when they consistently reach



lower double digits as a daytime high and single digits as an overnight low, this is typically when the building can no longer maintain a minimum temperature of 21C and the building heat will be turned on.

Mike shared that on October 10, the outdoor temperatures were presenting this described pattern, and the building heat was turned on. However, with warmer weather that occurred over the weekend following, several tenants reported warm unit temperatures, and the building heat was turned off in response. As of this meeting time, the building heat remains off but will likely be turned back on later this week or next, as outdoor temperatures are monitored. Mike expressed that turning the building heat on and off is a common issue at this time of year, and that when outdoor temperatures are consistently cooler, the building heat will operate to the preference of tenants.

Emily asked where in the building that Operations measures the temperature. Mike confirmed that the minimum required ambient temperature in a tenant's space is 21C and there is no maximum temperature specified by the City of Toronto. However, Operations understands that tenant comfort levels should be considered, and that tenants will have varying comfort preferences. Mike mentioned that temperature measurements are taking in the unit's living space. Mike explained that the building's heating system is hydronic, cycling hot water through radiators in each unit. The system adjusts its output based on outdoor temperatures, increasing or decreasing heat as needed. Mike noted that the heating system is over 28 years old, so changes in output are gradual. Consequently, it may take time for a unit's ambient temperature to adjust, often lagging behind fluctuations in outdoor temperatures.

Emily inquired about how the system adjusts to outdoor temperatures, and whether this can be adjusted. Mike shared that the current heating system is not an automated one and that our buildings do not have the capability to be converted to a forced air system. In addition to it being costly to replace the current heating system, there are also challenges in making changes to the system while the units are occupied. A forced air system would require duct work to be installed in every unit.

Mike stated that currently, the radiator in each unit has a valve on it to allow water to flow to it. The valve is intended to be turned off only to isolate radiators for repair, versus having to turn off the water to the entire system. The valves are not intended to be used to reduce water flow or temperatures in a unit. Mike explained that there had previously been a practice where Operations would reduce the water flow to therefore reduce a unit's ambient temperature, but this practice resulted in an increase of radiator repairs being needed and an increase in full building system shutdowns to complete the repairs. Operations currently will not reduce water flow to a radiator, and it is strongly recommended that tenants do not make any adjustments themselves. Mike stressed that when the outdoor temperatures become consistently cooler that tenants will experience more comfortable unit temperatures.

Tanea inquired about whether manual intervention is ever applied to the building's heating system in addition to the system's automated adjustments based on outdoor temperature readings, given that



this issue is predictable. Mike explained that the boilers and heating system are managed by the U of T engineering team. Mike advised tenants to review communications sent by Operations about the heating system at this time of year, which includes tips like closing a unit's radiator fins or using a fan or air conditioner if available. While these measures may not be economical, they can help during this brief shoulder season. Mike explained that if a radiator has been isolated in a unit, preventing water and heat from circulating to it, there could be a delay in having a maintenance technician available to re-open the valve if the weather turns cool.

Mwendwa asked if, instead of the building's system being reactive, the heating could be proactively turned off when warmer weather is forecasted, allowing for more human intervention. Mike explained that an automated system that can be fine-tuned more precisely would be a desirable enhancement for the heating system in the future and that UFH is investigating options for such a system. For instance, Operations installed domestic hot water pumps to help manage water pressure. Previously, the pumps operated constantly at a single level, even when lower water demand made that unnecessary. The new system allows the pumps to operate at varying levels based on demand. Regardless, the challenges of the shoulder season will remain, as we are still dependent on the weather.

Emily asked if U of T offers funding for building retrofits and capital projects in a way that prevents the project costs from being passed on to tenants through rent increases. Mike noted that there is a budget for capital projects which UFH determines based on condition assessments conducted by industry professionals, consultants, and U of T engineers. Both CSW buildings have been reviewed, and UFH is currently examining their reports, which confirm that the building systems are aging. Apostolo clarified that UFH does not receive funding from U of T or the government; UFH is self-funded, with all operations and services covered primarily by rent revenue.

Emily acknowledged that UFH's budget constraints are clearer now with the understanding that UFH is self-funded, and she inquired about exploring ways to collaborate with U of T to request funding. Apostolo clarified that UFH is an ancillary service and, as such, is self-funded, with reserve funds maintained for emergencies or contingencies. Apostolo explained that UFH operates on a lean budget, with assessments like those Mike referenced helping to prioritize projects and plan for future needs. Apostolo reiterated that UFH will provide the TE with a budget presentation. He also noted that one of the current capital projects underway is elevator modernization. Mike added that plans for future renovation projects will be outlined in the upcoming budget presentation.

Tanea stated that the TE would like greater visibility into these matters to inform tenants about planned projects. Sannah echoed the TE's interest in supporting UFH's outreach to tenants and offered to speak with U of T about UFH concerns. Sannah noted that rising temperatures present health risks and asked whether Operations has a threshold for the number of tenant reports needed before deciding to turn the heating system on or off. Mike reiterated that the City of Toronto sets a minimum



temperature requirement for heating but does not set a maximum. If UFH fails to meet this minimum temperature requirement, it would be considered negligent; however, this is not an issue when temperatures are warmer than the required minimum. UFH offers portable devices, such as fans and heaters, on loan to help with tenant comfort. Mike emphasized that the larger issue is that the system cannot be turned on or off quickly in response to rapid changes in outdoor temperatures. It can take several hours for the building to regulate its temperature. Operations makes the decision to adjust the heating based on outdoor temperatures. Mike also confirmed that if more than one tenant reports an issue, the Operations team will investigate the building as a whole. Mike explained that tenants often report their unit as too cool, but temperature readings may be upwards of 30C in the unit, indicating that tenant preferences are a factor. In some cases, heaters and fans need to be used to adjust comfort levels. Apostolo asked the TE, being mindful of time, whether they would prefer to park this conversation or carry it forward to a future meeting. Emily confirmed that the TE is ready to move on to the next item.

Selection of contractors. Tenants are unhappy with multiple accounts of third-party contractual work in UFH, for example, the slow and faulty elevator update process. Elevators are breaking down on the weekends and are not fixed until the following Monday. Tenants are also struggling with ineffective pest control and building security like package theft and non-tenants entering the buildings. The TE would like to discuss how to obtain better service, transparency and accountability of the third-party contractors including – How does UFH select contractors? If there is a selection process can tenants be involved? Can contractors be held accountable for their work? How is the budget set for projects?:

Mike stated that there are several third-party contractors involved, so clarity on which specific one to discuss is needed, but all contractors are selected through a competitive procurement process. Using the elevator modernization project as an example, Mike confirmed there are frustrations and assumes the complaints are coming from tenants at 30CSW, where the work is currently taking place. Mike acknowledged that this project can be inconvenient for tenants at times but clarified that there is no process in place to avoid elevator repairs on weekends as means of saving costs. In cases of elevator entrapment, there is an immediate response; however, there are situations where parts are required for repairs, and these cannot typically be sourced in the evening or on weekends. Emily confirmed that there was a day when one elevator was being renovated and another broke down, which occurred over the weekend and tenants complained about the wait times for the elevator, though Emily noted that there are multiple instances where elevators are out of service over the weekend.

Mike confirmed that one elevator is out of service at all times during the modernization project, and a second elevator is reserved for move-ins and move-outs at the beginning of a new month, as this is necessary. Mike stated that the elevator modernization project is on track to be completed according to the communicated schedule, with two of the four elevators already completed. Mike outlined that because the project is being completed while the building is occupied, both the old and new elevator operators must run in tandem, which can cause issues, such as the problems tenants experienced with



the hallway call buttons. Emily asked if Operations could communicate more quickly with tenants regarding elevator issues. Mike responded that the dates and times when elevators are set to be out of service are shared in advance, so tenants can plan accordingly. Mike stated that when Operations receives a report of an elevator issue, it is investigated promptly, whether reported by a tenant or security. Mike reiterated that specific details of an incident are needed in order to address the matter further.

Tanea stated that the TE would find it helpful to have visibility into how UFH selects contractors and a better understanding of the procurement process. Tanea also mentioned that the TE would like to assist with finding a solution for the elevator or pest issues. Mike emphasized that Operations does not aim to select problematic contractors, and the goal is always to hire reliable contractors who perform quality work and minimize tenant discomfort. Mike shared the playground renovation as an example, explaining that Operations went through the procurement process and engaged tenants about the playground features and colours.

Apostolo noted that the meeting had reached its scheduled end time and any members who needed to leave could do so. Apostolo shared the U of T procurement webpage and explained that there are stringent guidelines and preferred vendors set by U of T. Apostolo also mentioned that UFH tries to engage with the community whenever possible at different stages of projects. Using the playground example, Apostolo highlighted that UFH engaged tenants both before seeking a contractor and again when selecting playground finishes. Apostolo stated that UFH wants to involve tenants more frequently, potentially with the support of the TE, and suggested that this could be a topic for the TE orientation.

Building Operations Update – Mike

Heating System Update. The building heating systems were started on October 10th, but after a few days of warm weather, the Operations team decided to turn off the system on October 19th to ensure the units are not overheating. With warm temperatures expected the week of Oct 21st, the system will remain off until the 25th: Mike confirmed that this topic had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

Elevator Modernization. We have now completed the modernization of 2 out of 4 elevators at 30CSW. Project completion is estimated for mid to late January. We are also working with our elevator contractor to coordinate the installation of the in-car digital screens. Service shutdowns of each car may be required to complete the installation. Residents will be notified when scheduled: Mike confirmed that this topic had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

35CSW Emergency Generator Replacement. Replacement of this life safety device begun in early October. Excavation and shoring work to provide air intake and exhaust ducts for the generator is set to begin this week. The work will take place at the southwest corner of the property where La Scala Lane and St. Mary Street intersect. This work will be noisy and may affect residents who live on the south side of 35CSW. Please refer to notices sent out by the Operations team for more information.



Expected completion date is mid to late March: Mike shared that this project is an example of a high-priority initiative following an assessment of the equipment. It is currently underway at 35CSW and involves replacing a life safety device that provides heat, hot water, emergency lighting, and elevator service during an emergency. Mike confirmed that a communication was sent to tenants this week, informing them that the project has been delayed and is now expected to begin next week. An updated schedule will be shared with tenants. Mike also outlined that this project falls within the City of Toronto noise bylaws and is considered critical for 35CSW.

Emily shared that tenants have complained about lights in the neighborhood and asked if this could be reported to the City. Mike confirmed that tenants could contact City bylaw officers.

Admissions, Eligibility and Residence Life – Apostolo

- No admissions, eligibility and residence life matters were raised.

Other Business

TE Orientation: Apostolo confirmed that Dana will reach out to the TE to schedule a time to have this orientation, and that the orientation will be a presentation focused on how UFH operates. As well a budget presentation will be scheduled for late November or early December with the TE.

TE Listserv: Apostolo confirmed that he will reach out to Emily and Tanea to facilitate the TE listserv transfer. He also informed the TE that there are noticeboards in each CSW building that they may use. Emily confirmed that the TE already has the keys to these boards.

Next JCM

- Dana to reach out to TE to schedule TE orientation, November JCM, and Budget presentation.