

Minutes of Meeting – Final
Joint Committee Meeting – Charles Street Community – April 4, 2023

Management Members Present: Gloria Cuneo – Director, University Family Housing (UFH), Apostolo Zeno - Assistant Director, John Companion - Manager, Building Operations & Services

Tenant Executive (TE) Members Present: Maryam Owodunni - President, Lerato Mpye - Vice- President, Tenants' Association Executive.

Minutes: Penny Wilson - Business Officer.

New Action or Carried Forward Items:

- **TE LISTSERV:** Apostolo to forward the current April list within the next week or two.

Status of Action Items March 7, 2023

- ✓ **Survey Results** Master List of Assigned Leads and Action items to be developed and issued over the next couple of weeks – UFH Team.
 - Apostolo provided an update: a draft of action items has been finalized and will be sent to Maryam and Lerato over the next two weeks. This will detail the survey responses, actions taken, the roll-out plan, and identify leads assigned from the Res Life or Operations Teams.

Building Operations Update - John

Elevators Modernization Project: The contractor initially submitted a schedule to start the first week of April, however, that date coincided with the exam schedule. The project is now scheduled to start the first week of May. Communication is to be sent out this week to inform all tenants of details. This communication will initially be sent to Maryam and Lerato and they may choose to post on TA Facebook page or other TA communication channels. The more communication, the better. There is a larger communication strategy that will be deployed including regular website updates and posters. UFH plans to hire Community Ambassadors (job postings will be posted on the University's recruitment sites and there will be notifications on UFH website for the hiring of possibly 6 individuals to work 12 -15 hours per week). The Community Ambassadors' role includes greeting residents in the lobby, helping residents navigate the use of the stairs where possible, help with crowding etc. Good communication throughout this project will be key as the elevator project will be disruptive to residents. We will advise tenants to give themselves adequate lead times, use stairs where possible, avoid peak busy times etc. The duration of this work will be lengthy: May to December 2023 at 35 Charles and January to November 2024 at 30 Charles.

Gloria reiterated that this will be a difficult time and her team will deploy every means possible to be transparent. Her team will manage the use of the service elevators and communicate as much as possible to assist tenants in getting in and out and to plan their days without too much frustration. During this period, UFH staff will be extra attentive to listening to people and remain open to suggestions. It is a necessary project. The

elevators need replacement and are in constant use. John added that service elevators will not be booked during the busiest time of 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm. UFH will take all steps necessary to minimize the level of disruption and updates will be communicated on the website under Project Updates.

Playground Upgrade:

During the last meeting John explained the delay in obtaining the equipment. UFH will negotiate to start the project in the Spring of 2024. Currently the project is in the final stages of the award process.

Lerato asked if we can secure pricing now for the later start date. Gloria agreed this is a good question and UFH makes every attempt to secure the most favourable pricing for all work, recognizing that we are in a period of supply chain shortages and inflationary pressures.

30 Charles Roof:

The University's Facilities & Services (F&S) team will be managing the award for the roofing project and will issue a Purchase Order to the contractor. John is expecting to get a communication from the F&S Project Manager and this work is expected to be complete by the end of this calendar year.

Tenants' Association - Maryam & Lerato

Budget for Events: Maryam acknowledged that both the current Tenant Executive (TE) and the former Tenant Executive recognized the need to increase the profile of the Tenant Association (TA). One way to do this is to hold events. Maryam asked if funding and other support and resources could be made available for this purpose as student finances do not allow for these types of expenditures.

Gloria said that UFH shares the same objective: to raise the profile and awareness of the TA. Gloria explained that UFH does not provide funding to the TA for events. UFH does not have a means by which we can hand over funds for food and supplies. However, UFH is happy to assist in many other ways such as producing flyers, making space available for events such as the Roof-Top Garden, the Meeting or Recreation Rooms. UFH could assist to provide space, based on availability, and could help facilitate events, for example providing the Residence Advisor (RA) Team for support or providing Security (since many rooms have restrictions in terms of occupancy limits) etc. Gloria suggested that the Maryam and Lerato set up a discussion with Apostolo and his team. The Residence Life Team can assist when there are big UFH events such as the Spring Roof Top Garden Opening or Building Wide Socials, so that a table can be set up for the TA. UFH can purchase and store banners to help highlight the TA. For these large-scale events, UFH will have refreshments on hand, often the Family Care Office is on site, and these create good opportunities to meet tenants. Maryam and Lerato will reach out to Apostolo to further pursue these initiatives with his team, Maureen, and Erin, so the TE can piggyback on UFH events. Gloria added that a Fall "Meet and Greet" event would be a good opportunity to engage with new tenants, welcome them to the community, and reengage with existing tenants at the start of a new academic year. UFH can assist in showcasing the TA at these large events, UFH can deal with the costs, and can advertise/promote that the Tenant Executive will be present. Gloria added that Apostolo is currently arranging to purchase UofT/UFH banners and can have one designed for the Tenants Association which we can store for future events.

Maryam and Lerato agreed to get in contact with Apostolo to arrange a meeting. Participating in welcome events would be helpful. Maryam added that these in person events help build a sense of connection that is sometimes lost in big cities especially when people are new and living in high rise towers.

Gloria added that UFH has tried to create community in a variety of ways, and it has been especially difficult during the pandemic. This is one reason why it is so important to have the 7 Residence Advisors hold events for their respective communities as well as building wide socials. Gloria encouraged Maryam and Lerato to work with Apostolo and team, become familiar with upcoming events that fit with their schedules, encourage others to participate, and pick events that would maximize TA exposure.

Spring Programs & Activities: Lerato brought forward the topic of Spring activities for children (e.g., the Tuesday and Thursday activities). Apostolo said there are always new activities and events in development. The annual Roof-Top Garden event is coming up soon and will be announced shortly. UFH has had recent success partnering with the Toronto Public Library (TPL) which has resulted in many residents signing up for library cards.

Apostolo added that he will be rolling out a survey to get feedback on Residence Life Programming asking what residents enjoy now, what else would they enjoy, what types of programs are currently relevant etc. Apostolo mentioned the recent success with the Gardening Workshop, which despite some of it being virtual, there was still very high participation often with 30 plus people on a Zoom call.

Washing Machines/Dishwasher Issues (sink backups):

Lerato recognized the time and effort the TE and UFH Teams have spent discussing this issue, however, the issue unfortunately continues. Lerato recounted a story of a tenant who called Security at 11:00 pm. Security walked all the floors and could not hear anything even though the tenant could clearly see the impact in their kitchen sink. Tenants continue to complain about this issue, back up of dirty water in kitchen sinks, on the Facebook page.

John said that UFH is legally bound to provide 24 hours notice before entering a unit and this provides those intent on using an illegal appliance ample opportunity to hide the appliance and the connection. The UFH Operations team has just completed the Annual Unit Inspections of all 711 units, and none were seen to have illegal appliances. However, this continues to be a serious issue. John suggested that contacting Security is the correct course of action, however, tenants could also send a picture, with date, time, building and unit number to the Residence Office. The Operations team can try to narrow down the offending unit e.g., if 401 and 501 are complaining but 601 is not we can try to narrow it down. UFH approach is not to accuse people but rather to educate. We would not identify/disclose those units providing pictures - - the pictures would be for the operations team to assess.

Gloria added that this unacceptable issue is persisting, and many tenants are being impacted. We are expending much effort on this with little results, so question becomes what we do next. Gloria suggested that a peer-to-peer campaign may be effective. Perhaps the TA can start a campaign on Facebook - - unit numbers cannot be disclosed of course, and the campaign would be in the spirit to



educate, not to shame people, and show them the impact on their neighbours and generally raise awareness.

Apostolo said that the Residence Life team is working with the RAs on passive programming focussing on posters that are educational in nature. We want to inform tenants what they can do, what they can't do and link it back to the lease agreement (e.g., you can paint with approval, but you cannot do plumbing alterations). There may be opportunities to create educational videos on this topic that can be shared with the TE and the broader community.

Maryam gave another example of a tenant calling Security and that too yielded no results. Maryam asked if the impact is from adjacent units (horizontal/on same floor) or from vertical units above and below. Gloria said our plumbing lines/riser lines run up and down. John reiterated that it would be helpful for tenants to send emails to UFH Operations team. The email should include unit occupied, dirty water back up experiences at specific date and time, and this is what was seen (providing a photo). John agreed the issue is from the vertical risers but there could be an impact from back-to-back kitchens, but this is rare. Gloria added that the educational component should include an explanation of the risers etc.

Maryam said the TE is happy to work with the UFH team, but this issue is not stopping. Maryam wanted bullet points provided to tenants: this is what to do, send a picture, call Security, send an email etc. Maryam agreed that videos and pictures will help as well as posters and we must continue with this concerted effort. Maryam said it is important to appeal to people's good nature. Gloria is happy to partner on these opportunities and agreed the dirty water back up is unacceptable.

Admissions, Eligibility & Residence Life - Apostolo

Transfer Process Waitlist Project Update: The transfer application process has been in the works for almost a year beginning last spring after hearing from tenants. Tenants wanted the process to be more transparent. UFH engaged a third-party individual from the University to conduct a review. The transfer process covers someone who is currently residing at Charles Street but seeks a larger unit to accommodate a growing family as one example. The goal was to enhance the process in three areas:

- Increase transparency: tenants would know their status on the wait list
- Ease of process: improvements on webpage for clarity
- Automation: automate process to mitigate chances of errors and move from a paper based to online utilizing Microsoft Forms. Application can be done on-line, and an automatic email receipt sent a confirmation.

Late fall Apostolo's team developed an action plan which was shared with the community in December containing short-, medium- and long-term recommendations. The plan was posted on the website. In addition, quarterly updates were sent out to inform transfer applicants of their status.



In January a further enhancement was developed so that tenants could submit directly on StarRez eliminating the need for other software such as Microsoft Forms. This process will now connect to the residents' profile in StarRez and residents can check their status at any time. Currently we have a prototype of this process and are working on testing. Apostolo wants the testing to be inclusive and asked if either Maryam or Lerato would be interested in participating. The testing takes 15-20 minutes and involves a series of simple questions - - it's a walk through of the process using a hypothetical application. Apostolo invited Maryam and Lerato to contact him if interested. UFH will obtain feedback from the testing, tweak the process if needed and share on website in late Spring.

UFH has moved to a very transparent process and from quarterly updates to providing the ability for tenants to check their status on the waitlist for themselves in real time.

Lerato asked if the same process could be applied to **external applicants**. Apostolo has a meeting tomorrow to explore this very issue. He cautioned however that the external applicant waitlist is large and complex, and this will take time to work through. We will need to assess if this is viable with StarRez. Maryam added that this would be very helpful for students coming from outside of Toronto. Gloria added that we are eager to do this but there are many complexities such as not everyone on the list is eligible i.e., anyone can apply and then they go through a vetting process that includes assessing student status, affordability etc. For any process, we must manage expectations. Although there is lots to unpack this is a good point to raise and Apostolo has begun to explore. When Apostolo has more information, he will provide an update. It may be about refining the application pool such that we are looking only at a certain cohort that has progressed along in the eligibility confirmation process.

TE LISTSERV: Apostolo met with Maryam who signed off on the agreement. The most recent email addresses following the April move-ins will be uploaded to the List Serv tomorrow. Apostolo will connect with Vice-Provost's Office to track the upload and expects to have the LISTSERVE ready for the TE within 1 to 2 weeks.

Other Business

- No other business was raised.

Next JCM: May 2nd