

Minutes of Meeting – FINAL
Joint Committee Meeting – Charles Street Community – June 6, 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:

Free Store Operation: Apostolo to brainstorm with Residence Life Team on how staff could ensure those accessing the Free Store are limited to people affiliated with the Charles Street Community. In addition, Apostolo to check on the promptness with which donations are sorted and stocked.

Information to Tenants from Residence Office: John has ensured that the Housing Assistants do provide the proper information to tenants regarding air conditioners (a/c): tenants can check the free store, tenant notice boards for items for sale, and check the UFH website for information on a/c sizes for windows and UFH a/c policy.

Tenant Mail going to Vacant Units: John and Apostolo to check on the current protocols in place and assess if other action can be taken to address this issue.

Sharing Educational tools such as the Garbage and Recycling video: Apostolo was asked about sharing educational tools such as the new Garbage and Recycling video.

Fall Welcome Event: Apostolo and his team to determine best timing for a Charles Street Community wide social and share potential dates with Maryam and Lerato so they can get it on their calendars.

Status of Action Items April 4, 2023 (no meeting in May)

- **TE LISTSERV:** Apostolo to forward the current April list within the next week or two.
- ✓ Apostolo confirmed that all the details on LISTSERV access have been shared. Apostolo has provided step by step instructions on access but recognizes there may be a bit of a learning curve is open to chatting if there are any issues.

Tenants' Association - Maryam & Lerato

Heating System and Regulation of Heating System: Maryam understands the Charles Street buildings are older, the heat is centrally controlled, and there are no individual unit controls but wondered if there is anyway of better navigating the current system to meet tenant needs. The month of May saw some high temperatures followed by a cooler wave. Maryam said that the climate is perhaps not as stable now as when the laws were



written. In addition, there are variations in unit temperatures depending on their location within the buildings, such as the south facing and east facing would get the most sunlight. Maryam asked if it is possible to retrofit for individual unit controls?

John said there is no real solution to the current hydronic heating: it is either on or off. There are outside sensors that tell the boilers to throttle up or throttle down. It is not feasible to add individual controls into our aging infrastructure. This past spring the Operations team felt they made the right call to shut off the heat the week prior to the long weekend in May. By law, we need to maintain a minimum temperature of 21 degrees Celsius. We closely monitor nightly temperatures to ensure the buildings do not drop below that threshold.

Gloria added that there is some flexibility in the current system in that the building does have outdoor temperature gauges that sense temperature fluctuations and automatically adjust boilers higher or lower. In addition, with larger buildings there is the issue of heat retention, so we don't necessarily feel the adjustments immediately. The Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) was written in 2006 (prior version call Tenant Protection Act) and it may be that it contains language that needs to be updated, however this is what we are obliged to follow. We do respond to the recommendations of the building engineers and tenant demands where possible.

Lerato recounted her experience in her unit when a white powder was emitted from the air ducts when the heat came on. Lerato was worried that this could be a health risk especially for children or a trigger for those with allergies. John recalled this report and said that our duct cleaning contractor came in and cleaned the ducts to be safe. John added, however, that the system is only hot water heating i.e., it is just hot water going through pipes, there are no fan coil units, so the white powder is a mystery.

Gloria added that at the time a tenant vacates, we have our duct cleaning contractor clean all the heating coils in each room of the apartment as well as the vents in the bathroom and kitchen.

Gloria said that from an infrastructure perspective, the buildings were constructed in the 1960's, and, as someone born and raised in the city, it was common for houses/structures to be built without air conditioning. However, over time, and with climate change, there is a need for cooling. To put individual heat controls into the Charles Street units would be grossly invasive and prohibitively expensive. We have investigated this several times and it is not feasible. The University is planning to build new housing at Spadina and Bloor and Gloria participates in the planning meetings and makes it known that individual unit controls and proper cooling is a necessity in any new builds. Temperature regulation continues to be a challenge at Charles Street because everyone has their own preferences. Since we cannot put a cooling system in the building, we allow window air conditioning units.

Maryam brought forward the question of whether the Free Store accepts air conditioners. After the meeting, John verified that the Free Store does in fact accept air conditioners (small sizes) and this is stated on the website. John has verified that the Housing Assistants do provide the proper information to tenants regarding air conditioners (a/c) i.e., that tenants can check the Free Store, tenant notice boards for items for sale, and check the UFH website for information on a/c sizes for windows and UFH a/c policy.

<https://universityfamilyhousing.utoronto.ca/appliances-at-charles-street-west/>

<https://universityfamilyhousing.utoronto.ca/the-free-store/>



Maryam said that more importantly, tenants feel that the building should provide cooling and question why they are required to pay for air conditioning installation. There is a perception that this is unfair.

Gloria recounted the time when she first came to Charles Street and tenants were allowed to install air conditioners themselves. If not installed properly it is possible that a unit could fall, and the consequences would be tragic. To mitigate the risk, UFH imposed stringent rules around the installation of air conditioners. UFH hires contractors to install and remove all air conditioning units at Charles Street. The cost of this service is recovered from the tenant who requests the air conditioning. This is fair and equitable since otherwise, it would have to be recovered in rent and not everyone wants air conditioning e.g., some tenants prefer fans, or use portable units on floor with a vent etc. The charge provides peace of mind that the equipment has been installed properly.

Maryam added that the perception is that tenants are being charged for something that should be provided by the management in the first place. Gloria explained that although we understand the point being made, air conditioning is not part of the service we provide, and the cost should not be borne by everyone. This may evolve over time, but for now this is the balance that has been struck.

Free Store Operation: Lerato brought forward an issue of the Free Store donations not being sorted and shelved in a timely manner. Lerato asked if the Free Store is open only to the Charles Street Community or the public at large. Lerato has seen a woman who may not be a member of the Community access the Free Store. Lerato does not know if the staff have the authority to question if those entering are members of the Community. Lerato asked if people entering the Free Store could be required to show a T Card or confirm their affiliation in some way. Donations come from and are meant for the use of other members of the Charles Street Community. Also, Lerato gave the example that if a child was to forget their cell phone or tablet in the Free Store, we would expect another Community member to call Security to ensure it was properly returned but with members of the public, it may be less likely that the right action was taken.

Apostolo requested that if Lerato sees non-Community members in the Free Store she could bring this to his attention right away. Apostolo will brainstorm with the Residence Life Team: timeliness of sorting/stocking, Free Store access, how can we verify Community affiliation etc. The Free Store is a great initiative promoting sustainability and the “take something/leave something” philosophy. See Action items.

Garbage Disposal: Lerato would like to send a communication to tenants via the LISTSERV on this topic. There have been complaints of tenants leaving garbage by the chute, on the chute door, and left by the corner near the elevator. Lerato asked if the Residence Office can help the TE send an email to new tenants regarding proper disposal as well as proper sorting of waste e.g., diverting organics etc.

John said that the move-in package should make this clear. Apostolo said that Nikki and Erin have created a video walkthrough of the process covering the areas in the two buildings. Apostolo provided the video and web page link in the chat:

<https://universityfamilyhousing.utoronto.ca/garbage-recycling-at-charles-street-west/>

Maryam added that move-in time may not be the best time for tenants to receive this information as it is often a stressful time. Apostolo said the Residence Life Team put a lot of effort and thought into creating something



that would be fun as well as informative. Maryam asked whether educational tools such as this video could be shared with the TE. See Action items.

New TE Member: Lerato announced Mel Hiebert as a new TE member with the role of Secretary General.

Apartment Renovation and Maintenance: Lerato acknowledged that although the number of complaints has gone down, there is still an issue regarding paint or plaster chipping in a unit which is not maintained until move out. Lerato gave an example if a tenant were to live in a unit from the time, they were an undergraduate to obtaining a post graduate degree, how would their unit be maintained over that considerable length of time. In addition, Lerato, raised the issue of the quality of the work being done when a unit turns over. She questioned the amount of effort being put in to make things right and gave the example of hair being varnished into the floor surface. She said it seems as if no one verifies that the job was done diligently. Lerato suggested that UFH invest in a supervisor to review the work.

John said that if any tenant has any issues with plaster falling or paint chipping, they should submit a maintenance request and it would be immediately addressed by the Operations Team. John added UFH does have staff whose job it is to inspect units prior to move in and we have improved the quality of the inspections to ensure contractors do the job they have been paid to do.

Mail Being Left in Vacant Units: Lerato said that tenants moving out have asked if, while the unit is vacant or being renovated, they can be allowed to enter to pick up important mail or if the contractor can collect mail and have Residence Office assist so that mail is not thrown out. Maryam said that there have been complaints that people have moved out and a package has gone to their old unit and the Residence Office position is that they do not redirect or retain mail. Maryam said that even with increased education about mail forwarding, processes still may not work as smoothly or as fast as one would expect. Maryam suggested that contractors should drop off mail to the Residence Office.

Gloria said that the current protocol is that contractors would not touch any mail that comes to a vacant unit. A UFH Property Operations Coordinator would pick up the mail and it goes back to Canada Post as "return to sender". We do not have the capacity to hold mail.

John said that this advice is part of the move-out package and the earlier a tenant makes the arrangements for mail forwarding, the better so that the transition won't be as difficult. John and Apostolo will investigate to determine if further action can be taken. See Action Items.

Access to Roof Top Area at 35 Charles (above Rabba): Maryam asked if this area is open to residents? People were spotted at that location and residents did not know if they should contact Security because they were not sure if this was permissible.

John said no, tenants should not be in that area, and any incidents of this should be reported to Security who are available to respond 24/7. John said when in doubt, tenants can always call Security and let Security provide the answer.



Elevator Modernization: This project began the first week of May and is on schedule. There is a 10-week time frame to complete each elevator (car). John gets a weekly report regarding the progress. UFH hired 6 Elevator Ambassadors who are all doing a good job assisting with tenant traffic flow and keeping tenants calm.

Playground Upgrade: A company has been awarded the job and this project will start in the Spring of 2024. The good news is that prices will be held firm. The project is scheduled to start in March 2024 and finish in May 2024 so there will be minimal impact to tenants.

30 Charles Roof: The flat roof at 30 Charles will be done this year and John is waiting for a schedule from the University's Facilities & Services group. This will provide further information on contractor start times. Once received, John will send communications to tenants. John stressed that this project will be messy and disruptive, and the contractor will be using the podium area at 30 Charles for disposals.

John's Retirement: John announced that he will be retiring and will be on site only until mid July. John added that UFH will have capable staff taking over and the wheels are in motion for several major projects.

Gloria added that a recruitment effort will be undertaken and in the meantime Gloria and Mike Kaev will keep projects on course.

Admissions, Eligibility & Residence Life - Apostolo

Transfer Waitlist Process and Demo with Tenants – Timeline for Release: Apostolo thanked Maryam and Lerato for their valuable help with the process, the demo, and providing key feedback. The process has moved from entirely paper based to almost fully automated. The process will be announced in next Friday's Newsletter. The process will go live on the STARportal on Friday June 16th. Tenants will be able to check waitlist status and those who have previously applied will be migrated to the STARportal. To help make this easier, a narrated, walk-through video will be posted on the website. In addition, the web page will be revamped to fully describe the process and to provide the necessary feedback loop. Every quarter, Apostolo and his team will review the feedback and integrate changes if needed.

Thanks to the participation of Maryam and Lerato, simple features like the option to cancel an application have been added.

Gloria extended her thanks to Maryam and Lerato and all who participated.

Other Business

July and August Joint Committee Meetings: Gloria said that typically Joint Committee meetings are not scheduled for July and August. Members of the Tenants' Association may be away, doing research or vacationing and staff members are also taking vacation. However, Gloria is open to whatever Maryam and Lerato would prefer. There is always an option to hold an ad hoc meeting and Maryam and Lerato can reach out to Gloria and Apostolo as needed. Lerato responded that if there are pressing issues they will be in contact by email. Maryam agreed that summer is a slowing down period. Gloria and Apostolo will respond quickly if a



need arises. The group concluded that nothing will be scheduled in July and August. We will reconvene with a formal meeting structure in September.

Fall Welcome Event: The topic was raised of a formal welcome event for new, and current tenants. Apostolo and the Residence Life Team are determining the best timing. We typically try to avoid programming in early September. The best time may be late September or early October. Apostolo said that when he and his team have a general idea of timing he will loop in Maryam and Lerato. The idea would be to have UFH staff, Maryam and Lerato, the Residence Advisors (RAs) all participate in a Charles Street Community wide social. Apostolo will determine possible dates and share with Maryam and Lerato so they can get this in their calendars. Gloria said we need to reinstate the welcome event which may have gotten diluted during the pandemic and added that this is a vibrant community, and it is important to bring everyone together.

Programming In General: Lerato commented on the success of the Yoga program with Ruth. Apostolo agreed and he and Song are aware of the popularity of those sessions, and they are trying to find ways to expand and meet the demand. Apostolo will pass on these comments to his team.

Maryam mentioned that a Pizza Party at 35 Charles would be most welcome as the one at 30 Charles was a success.

The Gardening programs were well received and there is a plan to do more but a bit of a hiccup as the RA who was leading this will be doing some academic field work. More to come on this.

Next JCM: formal meetings will reconvene in September