



**Minutes of Meeting – Final**  
**Joint Committee Meeting – Charles Street Community – November 21, 2023**

**Management Members Present:** Gloria Cuneo - Director, University Family Housing (UFH), Apostolo Zeno - Assistant Director, Mike Kaev - Manager, Building Operations & Services

**Tenant Executive (TE) Members Present:** Mel Heibert - Vice President, Alexander Valencia Sanchez - Secretary

**Absent:** Maryam Owodunni - President, Tenants' Association Executive.

**Minutes:** Penny Wilson - Business Officer.

**New Action or Carried Forward Items:**

**Orientation Session:** Since there are several new TE members, an orientation session with the entire Executive will be scheduled. To be brought forward at the January JCM.

**Locker Availability/Allocation Protocol:** Mike to provide an update including any protocol changes.

**Rental Rates for Upgraded Units:** Gloria suggested that the TE reach out to Penny to set up a time for a more focused meeting with Gloria and Apostolo on this subject, especially considering it was brought up at the Tenant Association AGM.

**TE Agenda Items:** TE agenda items for next JCM include: 1) Gym space 2) Pests Assessment/inclusion in survey and 3) Survey results.

**Status/Updates of Action Items from October 17, 2023**

**Packages:** Apostolo and Mike are continuing to work on this issue and will have a discussion around their findings at the November JCM. Since the two buildings are limited in terms of space, Gloria said there are two approaches being explored:

- ❖ The UFH team is considering having external companies, experts in this area, visit the site to assess options considering our current space constraints and configuration.
- ❖ We are awaiting updates and further information from the Real Estate Team on who the retailers located at 730 Yonge may be.

**Progress Update November 21:** Mike is currently exploring with several companies who provide storage and pick-up facilities. Still very much in research mode having reached out to a few providers. Mike is researching what goes into housing these parcel units, how many are needed for these buildings, electrical needs, data and network capabilities (have to connect to smart phone app as well as delivery companies). The back-end connectivity issues must be fully explored before bringing in the equipment. Another important factor is determining the correct quantity i.e., what percentage of residents would require this service. Mike has a couple more meetings over the next



few weeks. This will be discussed with the UFH Team and then findings brought forward to a future JCM.

Mel asked about the possibility of Penguin Pickup coming to one of the commercial spaces. Gloria said that unfortunately they declined to take on the lease and are going elsewhere. Mel asked whether there is room to house this service in one of the commercial spaces. Gloria said that the retail and commercial spaces at 30 Charles/730 Yonge and 35 Charles belong to the University's Real Estate department. If UFH were to take a space, we would be paying market rates for any space we would occupy. Mel said this is useful to know because people say there is space for amenities but do not realize that if UFH were to occupy the space they would be charged the same rate as any other tenant in the market. Gloria said these are good questions to explore and even though this idea did not pan out, we need to continue to bring creative/alternative solutions to the table.

**Approach on Rental Rates for Upgraded units:** Gloria suggested since this topic was raised at the AGM, it might be beneficial for Gloria and Apostolo to have a separate discussion with the Tenant Executive. Gloria asked Maryam to reach out to Penny who will arrange a meeting. Maryam will get in touch with Penny to schedule (and early morning or early evening meetings are an option).

**Progress Update November 21:** Gloria again put forward the option and encouraged Maryam and the TE Team to reach out to Penny to schedule a call on rental rates.

**Tenant Executive Election:** Maryam and Mel to provide Gloria and Apostolo with the election results. This item carried forward from September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Progress Update November 21:** Names of the new Tenant Executive, their positions and contact information has been sent to the UFH Team.

**Tenant Executive Orientation:** Maryam and Mel to provide Gloria and Apostolo the names of the new Tenant Executive members once the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Tenant's Association is concluded. This item carried forward from September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Progress Update November 21:** Since there are several new members of the TE, we will bring forward at the January JCM. An orientation with the entire Executive will be scheduled. See Action Items.

**Annual UFH Budget Presentation to the Tenant Executive.** Penny has reached out to determine the best timing for the annual budget presentation which typically takes place early December. This item carried forward from September 22<sup>nd</sup>. The TE felt that scheduling should take place with the inclusion of new Tenant Executive members after the elections.

**Progress Update November 21:** Although the date of December 6<sup>th</sup> was agreed upon, UFH needs to receive the TE's preference for time as well as the list of TE members to be invited. Gloria confirmed that the UFH Team is available anytime on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Mel to provide this information to Penny by the end of the week.



**Storage Locker Availability and Process:** Mike and Apostolo to send an email describing the process and availability. This is intended to help the Tenant Executive respond to future queries.

**Progress Update November 21:** Mike reached out to the Housing Administrator to get a better idea of the process. After a review with the Housing Administrator and Apostolo, they identified a few refinements to the existing protocol that will be made. There is some information on lockers on the Amenities page of the UFH website. Mike added that to the best of his knowledge, storage lockers are not mentioned in the lease. Currently there are lockers available at 30 Charles. Around 74% of the units at 35 Charles are two-bedroom units and are therefore not eligible for lockers since they have a walk-in closet. Mike said that the current protocol may change. There is not much of a waitlist currently and there are 50 vacant lockers at 30 Charles. Mike will review further and provide an update at January's JCM.

Mel said that some people with two-bedroom units do have lockers. Mike agreed this may be the case and it is possible that these represent former one-bedroom tenants who were transferred to a two-bedroom unit.

Gloria said that periodically we have done audits of the lockers and assignments, and we are due for another audit. Gloria said locker allocation is an equity issue, and we want to be fair. We probably have not done an audit since the pandemic. We will conduct an audit in the new year. If we find there is no waitlist at 30 Charles, then in fairness we could offer those in a one-bedroom unit at 35 Charles a locker at 30 Charles.

**Contractor Badge Compliance:** Mike agreed to take the following actions:

- Post a sample badge in the Security booths.
- Ensure that Security's Post Orders are complied with so former tenants, without a FOB, cannot access the floors without a security escort.
- Provide a further update on compliance for contractors working in the buildings.

**Progress Update November 21:** Mike has put a badge sample in each lobby. During the day Security is ensuring that contractors on site are wearing badges. In addition, Security Post Orders have been updated to help ensure that guards keep a watch for former residents accessing the building. The incident that was brought forward at the last meeting was investigated and it was determined to have involved a guard who was new to the site. Mike has informed Security that this is not to happen going forward. Mike said that from what he has witnessed, all contractors are wearing badges. Mike said that there are some contractors who might not e.g., a roofer since they not going into a suite and not interacting with residents. Mel felt this issue was resolved. Mike agreed to stay on top of it.

**DEI and RA Selection Process:** carry forward from October 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. Mel said that she did not have a lot of background on this issue but wanted to be able to assure residents that the process was conducted in a fair and transparent manner.

Apostolo described the process. Residence Advisors (RAs) are hired for a one-year period, from August to July. The application package is posted on the UFH website because only Undergraduate or Graduate students residing at 30 or 35 Charles are eligible. The UFH recruitment practice is aligned with U of T standards for



recruitment. Applicants are required to submit a resume and cover letter as well as a 500-word reflection on what they could contribute to help our diverse community. Both the UFH Residence Life Coordinator and Apostolo review the applicants. There are seven positions. Applicants are screened and references are contacted. Those hired undergo extensive training similar to other U of T Dons e.g., conflict resolution and safeTALK suicide alertness training.

Mel asked if someone works in this position for a year and reapplies, do they have an advantage? Apostolo said there is an opportunity to return however they would still be required to go through the same recruitment/job competition process. In addition, their past performance would weigh into the hiring decision. The maximum term is three years/cycles.

Mel asked what experience is relevant and are the candidates assessed from an EDI perspective. Apostolo said that the first criteria would be a candidate's ability to have worked and interacted with others in a diverse community as well as their experience in programming events. In addition, a candidate must be willing to commit to 10-15 hours of work with the community each week. A candidate must be able to collaborate and work with other RAs as well as with the UFH Residence Life Team. From an EDI perspective, there are RAs with different backgrounds and wide-ranging academic experience. UFH posts the various languages that the RAs speak so people can reach out and be comfortable.

Alex asked whether unsuccessful applicants receive feedback. Apostolo responded that someone from the team would meet with the candidate and advise them on which areas to focus on, help coach and provide feedback. Apostolo also noted that if a potential candidate is not successful on the first round, there are occasions where those hired need to step down for personal/academic reasons and the recruitment team will reach out to the next tier of candidates.

#### Tenants' Association - Maryam & Mel

**Heating System Update:** Mel said that the buildings are still hot especially at 35 Charles and people have given up sleeping in certain rooms like bedrooms. She added that we are past the transitional/shoulder period.

Mike said that the shoulder season can see some unseasonably warm temperatures even in the mid-teens. Unfortunately, the buildings have a hydronic system, and the thermostats cannot be adjusted. Even the minimum output maybe too high for comfort. Compounding this is the fact that heat levels are a personal preference. Mike's experience is that complaints subside in January and February. In the past it was the department's practice to make adjustments in the units themselves. However, this practice is not recommended by our mechanical contractor and has been stopped. These adjustments, done in the past, restrict the water flow into the radiator by closing the isolation valve (which is meant to be the shut down mechanism in an emergency). If there is an issue with the valve, and it can't be isolated or frozen, it may necessitate a Building wide shut down which, if it happened in January, would present a serious issue heating a building with small children.

UFH is required to maintain a temperature of 21 degrees by law. If the temperature dips below that in the buildings, then action must be taken. If the temperature rises to say, 24 degrees then UFH cannot turn off the heat. That is when other actions are recommended to the tenants such as opening a window, using a fan or air



purifier, or turning on a window air conditioning unit. It is recognized that this building, built in the 1960's is not an efficient building. A forced air system cannot be brought in. Mike asked that if complaints come through to the Tenant Executive members to please send them to the Operations team who will consult with the Building Engineers and ensure the residents' concerns are addressed.

Mel asked if bringing in a forced air system has been explored. Mike said it has been considered but doing something like that is a major overhaul of a major system and would not only be cost prohibitive but also a significant disruption - - it would require running duct work into each unit and is nearly impossible. Mel asked if the idea is to not have these buildings in the future. Gloria said there is additional housing being planned located at Spadina and Bloor (371 Bloor) where UTS and Sociology are currently located. The University is in consultations to develop this land however, UTS will remain. The University is contemplating a development of 600-700 apartments that could potentially house student families, faculty and librarians as well staff. This development, now in the early planning stages, will take a number of years.

Gloria added that a major change to the Charles Street infrastructure, such as putting in a new heating system, would be an enormous disruption and the costs outweigh the benefits. The buildings were built in 1969 and at the time, the building design was considered to be smart and efficient - - the thinking at the time was to put in a central system but buildings and building systems have evolved. Student Family and Faculty Housing is in very high demand and UFH already operates a neighbourhood of low-rise units in the Huron Sussex neighbourhood of mixed types of occupancies. The mixed typologies in Huron Sussex have worked well and the University is looking to expand on this model. Although the University is looking to build elsewhere, UFH is still committed to investing in the Charles Street buildings and upgrading the infrastructure. The UFH budget is a clear demonstration of this commitment to invest in and sustain the buildings at Charles Street. The Charles Street buildings have come a long way since the University took them over. They now provide very decent housing options, supported by significant investment both in upgrading the buildings as well as in supporting and developing community.

Gloria added that since the Charles Street buildings were built in 1969, there is a need to continually address the large-scale deferred maintenance work. If this were single student residences, we could take a floor or two off-line for a period of time. However, vacancies in these buildings happen sporadically.

**Printer/Photocopier:** Apostolo said that there has been some exploration of this as part of the 2023 survey which attempted to gauge/quantify current interest. The idea had mixed reviews with 29% saying they would never use such a service, 25% said they would use once every few months with another group saying they would use 1-2 times per week. Apostolo said he is still in the exploratory and data gathering phase. Before proceeding, the level of interest must be assessed. In terms of a potential location, if this were to proceed, the Meeting Room which is open 24/7 with internet connectivity would be an appropriate location. Further information to come.

**Second priority TE agenda items:** It was agreed that the following items would be carried forward to the January JCM:

- Gym - Some residents have wondered if there's an option to have a small fee for service gym in either the new commercial space or possibly instead of the existing lounge space in 35 (which is underutilized space)



- Pests - Any recent assessments on how many units have pests? Was that asked as a question on the survey?
- Survey - when are we going to go over the survey results?

#### **Building Operations Update - Mike**

**Elevator Modernization:** It is important for Mel and Alex to hear the plans for the closure period. At 35 Charles, elevator #3 is now complete, up and running. Now moving on to the challenging service elevator which will take 10 weeks to complete. The elevator modernization work will continue through the period of the closure. Fortunately, this happens at a time when the volume of move-ins and move-outs is not high. This new elevator will be the dedicated service elevator. The Elevator Ambassadors will work during the holiday closure. In ten weeks, the project will be complete at 35 Charles.

**Laundry Update:** The laundry room at 35 Charles is closed this week as the room is being upgraded. The laundry room at 35 Charles is in need of an upgrade: we are seeing backups from the drains; equipment failure and the space itself needs to be upgraded. In the new year, the equipment will be replaced. In both buildings the lighting has been upgraded from fluorescent to LED which is brighter and more energy efficient. The entire drainage system needs to be overhauled as water is not passing through - drains were done in 2019 and in 2020 at 30 Charles. The reason for the shut down is the installation of new piping and new connection boxes in anticipation of the new equipment. The rooms will also be painted.

**Roof at 30 Charles:** A preliminary communication has been sent out and a new update will soon be sent out. The contractor will provide 1.5 hours of quiet time each day. Some units, particularly on the higher floors, especially PH, will feel the impact of this work. The quiet period will be noon to 1:30 pm each day during which there will be no noise, no heavy equipment being used.

**Other work during Holiday Closure period:** The closure period extends from December 21<sup>st</sup> with the offices fully reopening on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. There will be no interruptions to residents during this period. UFH is committed to keeping this period quiet and peaceful and in the next week or so, a communication will be sent out to residents.

#### **Other Business**

There will be no December Joint Committee Meeting, so we wanted to share the update on roofing and the plan for the closure period.

#### **Next JCM - Schedule**

- Budget Presentation is scheduled for December 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Monthly meetings will resume in January. Penny to reach out to TE in early January to consult on appropriate dates and time.