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Vancouver Housing Committee - Minutes

FOLDER NO 12-9

~~COOLIE VERNER PAPERS~~

Buck, Frank E.

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HOUSING COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Housing Committee was held at the City Hall on Thursday, October 12th at 4 P. M.

Present: Ald. H. E. Gutteridge,  
Prof. F. E. Buck,  
A. J. Harrison.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

The Committee discussed the effect of the War upon housing schemes in relation to the National Housing Act, and it was considered that in view of present conditions there was little likelihood of any progress being made in connection with low rental housing projects. There is, however, one point that must not be lost sight of, namely, that no loans for this purpose can be made under the Act after March 31st, 1940. It was decided that the Secretary should draw-up a brief resume of the Committee's effort to date, drawing attention to the date on which the Act would terminate. It was also decided the Secretary should write to Toronto and get details of what work had been accomplished to date under the Standard Housing By-law, and that an attempt should be made to induce the Council to take advantage of the charter powers already granted for a similar By-law in Vancouver. It was pointed out that money for such improvements might be obtained through the Home Improvement Plan.

The meeting then adjourned to meet at the call of the chair.

Chairman



H O U S I N G   C O M M I T T E E

A meeting of the Housing Committee was held in the City Hall on Thursday, December 29th, in #2 Committee Room.

Present: - Professor F. E. Buck,  
          A. J. Harrison

Mr. P. R. U. Stratton attended, and presented the details and plan of a proposed Housing Scheme in the Trout Lake District to be organized as a local housing authority. Mr. Stratton had not yet obtained the approval of the Provincial Government. It was considered advisable however, to draw the attention of the Council to this and other schemes at an early date, so that a definite pronouncement with regard to the attitude of the Council might be obtained. The secretary read correspondence from Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal pointing out at the same time the difficulty with regard to the tax reduction clause is being experienced in these cities.

The meeting then adjourned.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman.



H O U S I N G   C O M M I T T E E

A meeting of the Housing Committee was held at David Spencers Limited on Thursday January 19th at lunchtime.

Present: - Ald. H. E. Gutteridge,  
Professor F. E. Buck  
A. J. Harrison

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved

Professor Buck submitted a short report of his observations of certain slum areas recently visited by the Committee. The Secretary was asked to review the report and have copies mimeographed for distribution. It was also agreed that the Secretary should endeavour to formulate a scheme and obtain necessary details of the city's participation in a low-rental housing project. It was also agreed that the Secretary should endeavour to find out from the Social Service Administrator whether any check could be made on the type of accommodation given in return for rental allowances.

The meeting then adjourned.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman



H O U S I N G   C O M M I T T E E

A meeting of the Housing Committee was held at David Spencers Limited on Friday, January 13th at lunchtime.

Present:- Ald. H. E. Gutteridge,  
Professor F. E. Buck,  
A. J. Harrison

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

The Committee discussed the proposed meeting of the City Council at which at which it was hoped a definite policy would be formulated with regard to those regulations under the National Housing Act which effect the municipality. It was agreed that the Secretary should draft an agenda for the meeting, to which the chairman would adhere, in order that some progress could be made. The Committee then adjourned to visit various depressed areas under the guidance of Assistant Building Inspector, J. Reid.



City Hall,  
9th July, 1937.

H O U S I N G   C O M M I T T E E .

The first meeting of the Housing Committee, appointed by the Council to survey the housing situation in Vancouver and to present a comprehensive housing plan, was held in No. 2 Committee Room.

Present: Ald. H.E. Gutteridge; Prof. F.E. Buck (Town Planning Commission); A.J. Harrison, Sec'y.  
Zoning Matters.

Ald. H.E. Gutteridge was thereupon appointed Chairman of the Committee and A.J. Harrison, Secretary.

The Committee discussed their duties and powers, under the Council's resolution, and it was agreed that, as a first step, the Secretary should endeavor to collect from the Health and Social Service Departments, and from public organizations and other individuals, details of poor housing conditions existing within the City. Among the names suggested were Prof. Topping of the University of British Columbia; Dr. Davidson of the Welfare Federation; Rev. Hugh Dobson; Miss L. Holland, Mother's Pension Bureau and the Trades & Labor Council.

It was agreed that the Committee would meet again at the call of the Chair.



City Hall,  
29th Sept., 1937.

HOUSING COMMITTEE.

A meeting of the Housing Committee was held in #2 Committee

Room.

Re Survey of Housing Conditions in  
Vancouver.

Moved by Ald. Gutteridge,  
Seconded by Ald. Hurry,

That a committee consisting of the chairman of the  
Building, Civic Planning & Parks Committee, the Secretary  
for Zoning Matters and a member of the Town Planning Commission,  
be set up, with power to add such departmental officers as  
deemed necessary - for the purpose of -

- (1) Making a survey of the Housing situation in Vancouver.
- (2) To draw up and present a comprehensive housing plan to  
the Council, based upon the needs of the City.

The Committee to have authority to seek assistance  
from public or semi-public bodies, such as Sociology Department  
of the University of B.C., Welfare Federation or other groups  
of persons interested in housing conditions in the City; assist-  
ance from such bodies to be on a voluntary basis. -Carried.

The Secretary was requested to obtain additional copies of the New



City Hall,  
29th Sept., 1937.

H O U S I N G   C O M M I T T E E.

A meeting of the Housing Committee was held in #2 Committee Room.

Present: Ald. H.E. Gutteridge; Prof. F.E. Buck;  
and A.J. Harrison.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

Correspondence.

The Secretary submitted the correspondence he had had with the following:

Prof. C.W. Topping;  
Dr. G.F. Davidson, Welfare Federation;  
Rev. H. Dodson;  
Miss L. Holland, Mother's Pension Bureau;  
J.H. Creighton, Supt. of Welfare, Victoria;  
Rev. Andrew Roddan;  
F. Ivor Jackson, Secy., Vancouver Council Social Agencies;  
Rev. Father Cooper.

P.R. Bengough, Secy., Trades & Labour Council;  
J.W. Allan, Assessment Commissioner;  
Miss E. Le Sueur.

Information Received.

The Secretary submitted the following information, which had been received:

City Social Service Dept.,	-	Eleven months' shelter disbursements;
Corporation Counsel	- - - - -	City's Foreshore Rights & Authority;
Assessment Dept.,	- - - - -	Population Survey (1936);
Mr. H.V. Stratton	- - - - -	Housing Scheme.

Surveys.

The Secretary submitted a survey of Burrard Inlet and False Creek which he had made in company with one of the Assistant Health Inspectors; also a survey of some Blocks in the centre of the City which had been supplied by the Vancouver Council of Social Agencies.

A discussion followed as to the best mode of procedure with regard to a more general survey of certain portions of the City, and it was agreed that, if possible, assistance in this work should be obtained from organizations who were willing to assist, and arrangements were made for the Committee to have lunch with Prof. Topping of the University of British Columbia, who has already expressed his willingness to supply a number of students for this work. It was thought that the surveys might be confined to the following sections:

City Centre (Burrard to Cambie Sts.);  
West End (Burrard to Stanley Park);  
Main St. to Vernon Drive;  
Orientals & Negro quarters.

It was decided, after a consultation with Prof. Topping, that a date should be set for a meeting to which representatives of the following organizations would be invited:

University of British Columbia (Prof. C.W. Topping);  
Vancouver Council Social Agencies (F. Ivor Jackson, Secy.);  
Trades & Labour Council (P.R. Bengough, Secy.);  
Greater Vancouver & New Westminster Youth Council (John Jopson,  
Chairman Employment Committee);  
Local Council of Women Vancouver (Mrs. A.M. McGovern, Convenor);

The Secretary was requested to obtain additional copies of the New



Housing Committee - Pge. 2.

29/9/37.

Zealand Housing Act & Scheme.

The meeting then adjourned.

Chairman.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

At the request of the Chairman, the Secretary outlined the work which the Committee had already accomplished.

A general discussion ensued with, eventually, it was agreed that there should be a sub-committee to advise the Committee on all matters relating to the City and its other departments that would be of assistance to the Committee in planning the Scheme, and to make suggestions regarding the construction of the Scheme. For this purpose the Secretary was the principal person of authority and to co-ordinate the work.

It was suggested that information should be obtained from the City.

The Chairman suggested that the Committee should be asked to consider the question of the construction of the Scheme.

The Chairman suggested that the Committee should be asked to consider the question of the construction of the Scheme.

Details regarding the present location of the Scheme should be obtained from the City.

Details of present conditions.

Details of Housing Conditions investigated in New Zealand.

Details of British and American housing schemes.

It was decided that the next meeting should be at the call of the Chairman, in approximately three weeks time.

The meeting then adjourned.



City Hall,  
7th Oct., 1937.

H O U S I N G   C O M M I T T E E.

A meeting of the Housing Committee was held in #2 Committee Room.

Present: Ald. H.E. Gutteridge, Prof. F.E. Buck,  
and A.J. Harrison.

Prof. C.W. Topping (Dept. of Economics, University of B.C.)  
F. Ivor Jackson (Secy., Vancouver Council of Social Agencies)  
D. MacPherson (Trades & Labour Council).  
H. Smith & J.H. Godkin (Workers' Alliance - B.C. Division).  
Mesdames F. Rolston, T. Bingham & A.M. McCovern (Vancouver Local Council of Women).

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

At the request of the Chairman, the Secretary outlined the work which the Committee had already accomplished.

A general discussion ensued and, eventually, it was agreed that those present would endeavor to obtain details of over-crowded conditions in the City and any other information that would be of assistance to the Committee in placing before the Council, definite information regarding unsatisfactory Housing Conditions. For this purpose the Secretary was instructed to provide letters of authority and to co-ordinate lists for those undertaking this work.

Items upon which it was suggested that information should be obtained:

Vital Statistics: The comparison of births, marriages and deaths in relation to the construction of dwellings;

The percentage of children permitted in apartment houses;

Details regarding the recent increase of rentals throughout the City;

Details of recent evictions;

Details of Housing Conditions investigated in Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg;

Details of British and American housing schemes.

It was decided that the next meeting should be at the call of the Chair, in approximately three weeks' time.

The meeting then adjourned.

Chairman.



City Hall,  
3rd. Nov., 1937.

HOUSING COMMITTEE.

A meeting of the Housing Committee was held in #2 Committee Room.

Present: Ald. H.E. Gutteridge, Prof. F.E. Buck,  
and A.J. Harrison.

Prof. C.W. Topping (Dept. of Economics, University of B.C.)  
Miss Miller and Miss Hicks from the University.  
D. McPherson (Trades & Labour Council).  
H. Smith & J.H. Godkin (Workers' Alliance - B.C. Division).  
John Jopson and Miss Bunting (Youth Council).  
Mrs. Stuart Jamieson.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

The Secretary presented graphs recording the growth of population, registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths, and the number of dwellings erected year by year.

Miss Miller and Miss Hicks presented Surveys of the central portion of the City, mainly located around Georgia and Cambie and portions of the West End.

Messrs Smith and Godkin presented details of various dwellings examined, mainly in the South-east portion of the City.

Mr. Jopson, of the Youth Council, outlined the survey program which that organization wished to put into operation.

A general discussion regarding housing conditions and possible remedies followed; finally, the Chairman stated that an interim report, summarizing housing conditions in the City, would be presented to the Council at an early date after which, the Committee would begin an examination of the various schemes, which have been proposed or adopted in other cities and countries; it was agreed that representatives of the Builder's Exchange, Real Estate Exchange and similar bodies should be called into a consultation.

It was agreed that the effort to collect information on housing conditions should be continued, and the reports turned in to the Secretary.

The meeting then adjourned.

Chairman.



The Special Committee appointed on June 28th, 1937 to "make a survey of the housing situation in Vancouver and to draw up and present a comprehensive Housing Plan to the Council, based upon the needs of the City" beg to submit the following report:

**SURVEYS.** With the assistance of the Sociology Department of the University of British Columbia and other semi-public bodies, and with the help of certain Civic Departments, much information has been gathered, which not only reveals a deplorable shortage of housing accommodation, but also shows that many persons are living in what are generally described as "slum conditions" of the worst kind. As it is impossible to give the full details in this report, copies of the various Surveys are attached hereto. The Committee, however, wish to specify a few cases as being typical of existing over-crowded Housing Conditions:

(Examples)

**SHACKS, DILAPIDATED BUILDINGS.** Apart from overcrowding, a very unfortunate condition is being perpetuated in connection with dilapidated and, in some cases, condemned dwellings. Under ordinary circumstances, these buildings would stand vacant, or be demolished, but the great lack of suitable accommodation has forced people to occupy these premises to the detriment of their health and wellbeing. The rentals obtained are small and, therefore, the landlords will carry out no repairs, nor make any improvements; thus, damp and cold add their toll to the misery of the inhabitants.

**ZONING REGULATIONS.** The Zoning By-law has divided the City into Districts, the major portion being reserved for One Family Dwellings, but it is a well known fact that because people have been unable to find proper living quarters, thousands of dwellings in such areas are being occupied by more than one housekeeping unit, thus destroying to some extent, the benefits which the community should receive from the proper application of Town Planning Regulations.



- 2 -

WATERFRONT  
CONDIT-  
IONS.

A special survey of waterfront conditions was made and the report is attached hereto. This report shows a growing population is housed in some 200 boat houses and 100 dwellings on piles, or on the foreshore, at different sections of the City's waterfronts. As far as could be ascertained, there are some 400 adults and 85 children living in this manner. No count was taken of another large group living in boats. There is no sewage system, or septic tanks available for these waterfront groups and, in most cases, the buildings have no direct water supply. Some sections are very filthy and situated close to sewer outfalls.

VITAL  
STATISTICS.

A very comprehensive graph is attached dealing with population, registered Births, Marriages, Deaths and the dwellings erected during the years 1912 - 1936 inclusive. The Committee earnestly request a careful study of this chart. The graph shows in no uncertain way the startling lag of dwelling construction as compared to the steady increase of population, thus proving beyond a doubt that proper housing accommodation is a major problem in Vancouver and one that must receive the earnest attention of the authorities. This condition is further borne out by a careful survey of all dwellings in the City made in June of this year, which revealed the fact that only 1.5% vacancies existed at that time, these vacancies would be practically wiped out by the seasonal influx in the Fall; in this connection, it is interesting to note that, from figures available in Great Britain (1931), the empty dwellings were shown as 2.9%, whereas 5% is the proportion considered necessary for normal conditions.

GROUPS  
OF  
HOME  
DWELLERS.

The graph shows a slight upward trend in dwelling construction during the last two years, but an examination of the records prove the average cost per dwelling to be \$3,000; such a price places them far beyond the resources of the groups most affected by the shortage of houses. In relation to dwellings the population may be roughly divided into four groups, as follows:

(a) Persons who have sufficient funds to purchase any



type of dwelling outright, or to assume a mortgage, or to pay any rent demanded;

(b) Persons who can purchase modest homes on a rental-payment basis, or who pay a low, average rental;

(c) Persons who can only pay a small rental charge;

(d) Persons in receipt of Social Service Shelter Disbursements, or other forms of welfare assistance;

Group C contains a very large proportion of our young people who, in face of the prevailing house shortage, are forced to either postpone their marriages or live with parents.

SOCIAL  
SERVICE  
SHELTER  
DISBURSEMENTS.

With regard to Group (d), the Committee wish to call attention to the fact that the Social Service Shelter Disbursements for 11 months ending July, 1937, amount to \$397,694.37; during a similar period \$62,606.43 was disbursed to single men and women, and a portion of this amount was undoubtedly diverted to the payment of shelter charges.

COMMITTEE  
TO  
CONTINUE  
ITS  
WORK.

Finally, the Committee beg to state that it is now attempting the second part of its task, namely the preparation of a comprehensive Housing Plan. Already much valuable information has been secured and the opinions and assistance of interested organizations will be obtained; in the meantime, the Committee ask for a sympathetic study of this portion of their Report, in order that the Council may have a full understanding and true perspective of the unfortunate conditions which exist in our City today.

Respectfully submitted,

Vancouver Housing Committee - Minutes

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FOLDER NO

12-9



CITY HALL,  
November 16th, 1937.

H O U S I N G C O M M I T T E E.

A meeting of the Housing Committee was held  
in No. 3 Committee Room.

PRESENT:

Ald. H. E. Gutteridge,  
Prof. F. E. Buck,  
A. J. Harrison.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were read  
and approved.

A general discussion was held as to how the  
Committee should proceed with its work. It was agreed  
the Secretary should send copies of the Interim Report  
to the Vancouver Members of the Provincial and Dominion  
Governments and to the Minister of Labour at Ottawa. The  
Secretary was requested to continue gathering information  
that would be of use to the Committee in its studies.

The meeting adjourned to meet again at the call  
of the Chair.

Chairman.



City Hall,  
Jan. 27th, 1938.

HOUSING COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Housing Committee was held in the Mahogany Room, on Thursday, Jan. 27th.

Present:- Ald. H. E. Gutteridge,  
Prof. F.E. Buck,  
A.J. Harrison

and Representatives from the Sociology Department of the University of British Columbia, Trades & Labor Council, Workers' Alliance (B.C. Division), Local Council of Women and the Youth Council.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

Additional Surveys were handed in by the Sociology Department of the University, and the Youth Council.

The Committee explained their proposed action with regard to a housing scheme and a general discussion on existing housing conditions followed. In the course of the discussion a resolution was adopted unanimously by the representatives of the organizations attending the meeting, to the effect that the Council be asked to have a summary of the Committee's Report printed for public distribution.

The meeting then adjourned.

Chairman.



H O U S I N G   C O M M I T T E E

A meeting of the Housing Committee was held in the City Hall on Friday, May 6th, at 3:30 P.M.

Present:-    Ald. H.E. Gutteridge,  
                  Prof. F.E. Buck,  
                  A.J. Harrison.

The Secretary read a letter which had been drafted in connection with the following questions referred to the Committee by the Council on March 14th:

(a) "Whether loans under the Dominion Housing Act are restricted to certain portions of the City."

(b) "Whether loans are advanced only to persons in receipt of a regular salary."

It was decided to forward same to the Council.

The Secretary also submitted a Graph showing the house construction within the City, from Jan. 1st, 1929 to March 31st, 1938; this was to be attached to the letter for the Council.

The Secretary also read a letter from the Ex-Servicemen's League regarding housing and unemployment problems. The Secretary was requested to write to the League pointing out the City's inability to embark on such a project, also the lack of proper authority for the remission of taxation on assessments.

The Secretary produced correspondence with the Dominion Government in connection with the low rental housing scheme embodied in the Employment Commission's Report, and it was agreed the next meeting should be held at the call of the Chair.

The meeting then adjourned.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman.



H O U S I N G C O M M I T T E E .

A meeting of the Housing Committee was held in the City Hall on Friday, October 14th, at 4:P.M.

Present:- Ald. H.E. Gutteridge  
Prof. F.E. Buck  
A.J. Harrison

A general discussion was held regarding what progress had been made in housing since the inception of the Committee, culminating in the adoption of the National Housing Act.

The possibility of organizing a Local Housing Authority for the construction of small homes to accommodate old people, was discussed at length and correspondence with Mr. Ribchester of the Happier Old Age Club was produced. Eventually, it was left with the Secretary to endeavor to organize the outline of a possible Local Housing Authority to handle this particular housing situation.

A letter was read from the Vancouver Housing Association requesting Authorities from the Committee for certain of Prof. Topping's students to assist in the survey work; it was agreed authorities should be forwarded.

The meeting then adjourned.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman.



# H O U S I N G C O M M I T T E E .

A meeting of the Housing Committee was held in the City Hall on Saturday, Oct. 29th, at 10:A.M., in #2 Committee Room.

## Present:-

Ald. H.E. Gutteridge  
Prof. F.E. Buck  
A.J. Harrison

Ald. Bennett was invited to attend this particular meeting but was unable to do so owing to a previous engagement. The Chairman also invited Ald. Cornett, who was unable to spare the time.

The main object of the meeting was to discuss the possibility of obtaining funds, under the Dominion Housing Act, for the housing of aged people in the City of Vancouver, particularly those in receipt of old age pensions. Mr. Ribchester, Prof Hill-Tout and Mrs. attended, also Mr. Kennedy of the Old Age Pension Club. A general discussion followed on the number and living conditions of aged people in the City. Mr. Kennedy volunteered that there were some 5,000 people in the City of Vancouver drawing old age pensions.

After hearing the various statements of those present, the Committee requested more definite information as to the actual housing conditions and rentals paid. This information is to be forwarded to the Secretary as soon as possible.

After the above named had withdrawn, the Committee discussed the outline of a possible housing scheme for aged people, but it was decided to go no further in the matter until the details on housing conditions had been furnished to the Committee.

The meeting then adjourned.

Chairman.

*For your information*



SPECIAL MEETING

BUILDING, CIVIC PLANNING & PARKS COMMITTEE - NOV. 9, 1938.

A special meeting of the Building, Civic Planning and Parks Committee was held in the No. 2 Committee Room, City Hall, on Wednesday, November 9th, 1938, at 9:20 A.M.

Present: Alderman Gutteridge (Chairman) His Worship Mayor Geo.C. Miller, Aldermen Corey, Kirk, Cornett, DeGraves, Wilson and Bennett.

Also present: Mr E.M. Craig and Mr. Hannah (Pacific Housing Corporation).

Mr. N.M. Armstrong (Toronto General Trust Corporation).

The Committee begs to recommend to Council the adoption of the following report:-

Re Low Rental Housing Project.

The meeting was held for the purpose of hearing the representations by the representatives of the Pacific Housing Corporation and the Toronto General Trust Corporation in connection with the proposal to erect 100 low rental dwelling houses under part 2 of the National Housing Act, in that section of the City bordered by Clinton, Rupert and Charles Streets and 5th Avenue, as the first unit of 100 houses with a possible development into a larger scheme embracing 491 dwellings.

Considerable discussion took place with regard to the provision under this section of the National Housing Act, which requires that the Municipal taxes be limited to One Percent of the cost of construction.

In view of the fact that any action the City may take is dependent upon the outcome of the present application for Charter Amendments and in order that a report may be received from the City Engineer with regard to water and sewer facilities in this area, it is

RECOMMENDED that the meeting be adjourned to meet again at the call of the Chair, and in the meantime the City Engineer be instructed to submit information as to the nature, extent and cost of services which would be required in view of the above-mentioned development.

The Committee then adjourned.

*For your information*  
*G.F.*



# HOUSING COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Housing Committee was held in the City Hall on Friday, Nov. 4th, at 9:30 A.M. in #2 Committee Room.

Present:- Ald. H.E. Gutteridge,  
Prof. F.E. Buck,  
A.J. Harrison

The Corporation Counsel and the Building Inspector were also asked to attend.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

Messrs Craig, Anderson and Hanna appeared before the Committee on behalf of the Pacific Housing Corporation, and explained the details of a proposed low rental housing project in the northern end of Hastings Townsite. A general discussion followed in which it was pointed out that the Council could not give its official approval to any such scheme until the necessary charter amendments, in relation to the National Housing Act, had been obtained from the Provincial Government, and also that the Pacific Housing Corporation had not yet obtained a charter as a Limited Dividend Housing Corporation. However, in order to provide an opportunity for the Council to become familiar with the scheme and to be in a position to give a tentative approval, it was decided to report on the matter at the next meeting of the Building, Civic Planning & Parks Committee, and to request that a special meeting of that Committee be held at the earliest possible date for a further examination of the project.

The meeting then adjourned.

## Chairman.

1. That it is an established fact that crime, delinquency, and other social evils are directly traceable to overcrowding and inadequate housing accommodation, and that a continuation of such conditions will be against the effort and cost of all social legislation designed to improve the life of the community.

2. That the Act is designed to provide decent homes with modern conveniences at the lowest possible cost, for persons in the low income brackets, persons who under present conditions are forced to live in surroundings which are unsatisfactory and often unhealthy.

3. That a housing problem exists in all other countries, and great efforts are being made to solve it. As evidenced by the United States, where an amount of about hundred million dollars has been appropriated for this purpose.

4. That while the thirty million dollars appropriated by the Dominion Government is in no way commensurate with the effort in the United States, as in that country should make every effort to avail ourselves of the amount provided for this city. (\$1,500,000)



Agenda Prepared by the Special Housing Committee

This is a special meeting of the Building, Civic Planning, and Parks Committee called to discuss the adoption of a definite policy in relation to Part 2 of the National Housing Act.

Charter amendment passed on November 30, 1938.

" (305b) For authorizing and enabling the Council to enter into all agreements into which under the terms of the National Housing Act, 1938, of the Dominion of Canada, or any amendment thereof, it is contemplated that municipalities may enter."

Before proceeding to discuss the matter, the Committee would like to emphasize the following points:

1. That although the population of the city is steadily increasing, individual dwellings are no longer built for rental purposes. There is the occasional duplex dwelling erected, but these are so few in number they do not affect the problem.
2. That in literally thousands of homes, portions of the dwelling are sub-let to other families.
3. That rented dwellings of an average standard are, generally speaking, depreciating very rapidly through a lack of proper maintenance; and therefore rented dwellings below the average standard, many may be classed as unfit for human habitation, are steadily increasing in numbers.
4. That the number of undesirable and unsanitary shacks erected along various water fronts of the city is also increasing rapidly.
5. That it is an established fact, crime, disease, delinquency, and other social evils are directly traceable to overcrowding and inadequate housing accommodation, and that a continuation of such conditions militate against the effort and cost of all social legislation designed to improve the life of the community.
6. That the Act is designed to provide clean decent homes with modern conveniences at the lowest possible rent, for persons in the low income brackets, persons who under present conditions are forced to live and bring up their families in uncomfortable and often unsanitary surroundings.
7. That a housing problem exists in all other countries, and great efforts are being made to deal with the situation, as evidenced by the United States, where an amount of nine hundred million dollars has been appropriated for this purpose.
8. That while the thirty million dollars appropriated by the Dominion Government is in no way commensurate with the effort in the United States, we in Vancouver should make every effort to avail ourselves of the amount provided for this city. (\$1,328,000)



-2-

The secretary for the Zoning Matters will submit a graph of house construction in the city during the last three years, which has been mainly brought about by Part 1 of National Housing Act. This graph shows that only a negligible number of dwellings have been erected east of Ontario Street through the medium of the Act.

The secretary for Zoning Matters will read recent correspondence with other cities regarding housing schemes.

See example of Project, and variation in taxes on blackboard.

Letter from Mr. R. Orr referred to the meeting.

General Discussion.



# HOUSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Housing Committee held at 1675 West 10th Avenue at 4:30 p.m. on September 25th, 1941.

Present. C. T. McHattie (Chairman); A. G. Harvey, Miss Helen Gutteridge, A. J. Harrison, Mrs. B. W. Markham, Miss Elizabeth King, Dr. C. W. Topping, Mrs. E. A. Dalgleish, Miss E. Grubb, Miss Amy Leigh, Major O. L. Erickson, Mrs. F. J. Waters, and F. Ivor Jackson (Secretary.)

As this was the first meeting of the enlarged committee, the chairman read a list of the persons who had consented to serve on it.

History of Committee. The chairman stated that the Council had appointed a small committee on Housing in 1936, but shortly after its establishment the City Council's Housing Committee and the Vancouver Housing Association and others were set up and it was decided to suspend the activities of this Council's committee, but several of its members continued to serve on the above mentioned committees.

Active interest in housing died out and at the beginning of 1941 a group of persons who had been active on one or more of those committees met and requested the Council of Social Agencies to set up a Housing Committee representative of all sections of the community to study Housing conditions in Vancouver and, if necessary, to work out long range plans for their improvement.

The Executive Committee of the Council authorized the appointment of a Standing Committee on Housing on May 2nd of this year.

Status of the Committee. As is the case with other committees of the Council, the functions of this committee are advisory to the Executive Committee; its chairmen and vice-chairmen are members, ex-officio, of that committee.

The chairman of a standing committee has power to add to his committee at his discretion.

Memorandum. The chairman then called upon the secretary to read a memorandum regarding the present housing situation in the city, copies of which were distributed. (Copy attached to these minutes.)

Mr. Harrison submitted graphs showing the trends in Births, Marriages and Deaths, Total Population, and dwelling construction during the past 29 years.

Chairman. Mr. McHattie stated that the first duty of the committee would be to find a permanent chairman. While the appointment of committee chairmen and vice-chairmen rested with the Executive Committee, the importance of getting the very best man available for this particular committee was so great that he would prefer to have the advice and assistance of the committee in obtaining the right man.

There followed a general discussion of the situation, covering the failure of the city to avail itself of the provisions of Part II of the Dominion Housing Act, which Part has now been rescinded; the success of the Yessler Housing Project in Seattle; the possibility of obtaining Federal aid for the provision of accommodation for soldiers' families.

With regard to the Dominion Housing Act, the chief objection here and throughout the rest of Canada had been the requirement that building and land used should be relieved of a certain degree of taxation. Miss Gutteridge and Mr. Harrison pointed out that in every government housing scheme in the U.S.A. and in most other countries, the local municipality had to make some contribution either in the form of reduced taxes or as a straight financial grant.

Policy of Committee. It was finally agreed that the general policy of the committee should be:

- (a) To first build up a case for the need of better housing in Vancouver;
- (b) To inform the public, by a steady programme of carefully controlled publicity over a period, of conditions in the city and the ultimate effects of those conditions on the public welfare.



- (c) To interest a group of influential citizens in the situation who would be a spearhead for a public demand for action which would make itself felt in Municipal, Provincial and Federal levels of government.

The committee accepted the fact that this would be a long term programme, as not only would it take time to rouse public opinion while the war is on, but there was little likelihood of funds being available for undertakings of this type for some time.

Mrs. Markham asked if the activities of this committee would in any way preclude a strong regimental auxiliary from promoting a housing project for the families of members of its own regiment.

The meeting was of the opinion that on the other hand, the committee might be of assistance to the auxiliary in such an event.

Sub-committee. It was finally decided to authorize the chairman to appoint five persons to form a sub-committee with power to add to their number, whose duty it would be:

- (a) To select a chairman;
- (b) To prepare data regarding the present housing situation and take any other preliminary steps in developing the policy laid down at this meeting.

This committee to report back to the main committee at its next meeting.

Co-ordination. At the suggestion of Dr. Topping, the committee put itself on record as approving of the Council of Social Agencies acting as the co-ordinating body for all organizations interested in the improvement of housing conditions in the city.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m., to meet again at the call of the Chair.

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C. T. McHATTIE

Chairman

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F. IVOR JACKSON

Secretary

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FOLDER NO

12-9

Vancouver Housing Committee - Minutes



Memorandum for a Meeting of the Housing Committee  
September 25th, 1941

The Council of Social Agencies has received numerous reports of the difficulty of finding adequate housing accommodation, particularly for people with limited incomes, during the past few years.

It is also generally reported that this difficulty is not confined to medium and low income groups.

These reports have come from social agencies, regimental auxiliaries and civic bodies, and the situation has come directly to the notice of the Council in the course of surveys of different types that it has conducted.

Particularly was this the case in the recent survey of group work services in the West End Peninsula, where the degree of congestion in the residential buildings had considerable influence on the recommendations of the Survey Committee for more adequate group work services.

It is the concern of the Council to find out the reasons for this state of congestion, which in parts of the city, at least, is endangering the well being and future welfare of our citizens, to find out what are the prospects of its relief and what steps can best be taken to improve the situation.

It is possible that overcrowding is confined to certain localities and that there is ample accommodation in other sections which are not popular or that the present building boom is providing additional accommodation at a rate faster than the increase in population.

During the five year period, 1932-1936, 1635 dwellings were built, which is less than any two year period since 1921 to the present date. It was during this period that difficulties in finding homes was first reported. During the 11 years previous to 1932, an average of 1978 houses were built per year in addition to apartment houses.

These figures alone would indicate that there was possible justification for the reports of a shortage of accommodation and that by the end of 1936 a considerable amount of building would have to be done to bring the supply up to the needs of the population at that time.

During the period January 1st, 1937 to June 30th, 1941, permits were issued by the City Hall for the erection of 5,824 dwellings, an average of 1,294 per year, 684 per year less than the 11-year period prior to 1932.

In determining the housing needs of the city at the present time, other factors should be taken into account as well as the increase in population.

A marriage should constitute a demand for a separate dwelling unit, and the annual marriage rate since 1936 has been higher than any year during the 15-year period prior to that year.

It is reported that a large number of families of soldiers from other parts of Canada who have accompanied their menfolk to the coast while training, have remained in Vancouver when the units have gone East or overseas. How great a factor this may be is not determined, but its effect will be cumulative as the war continued.

Another factor, difficult to determine, is the number of people coming into the city to obtain employment in war industries; responsibility for providing housing accommodation for this group is in the hands of the Federal Government.

This committee is asked by the Council to act as an advisory committee to the Executive Committee of the Council in all matters pertaining to Housing.

There are immediate problems; housing of soldiers' families, and the housing of low income families, but the committee, chosen as representative of as wide a divergence of interested parties as possible, is appointed to interest itself in the whole problem of Housing, and to work out and bring forward long-term plans that will reduce to a minimum the most unhappy conditions under which many of our fellow citizens are living at the present time, and have lived for far too long a time in so spacious a city.