

Deputation – Catherine Wilkinson

Item 6. City Council Directions Requiring Board Attention
TCHC GCHRC Public Meeting – September 4, 2024

Item 6. CITY COUNCIL DIRECTIONS – BOARD ATTENTION

DEPUTATION

*Page 9. MM6.36 – Requesting Accountability for the Destruction of the
Community Garden at 133 Broadway Avenue*

Directors may not be aware of the extent of labour and love that tenants put into beautifying TCHC communities every summer.

This is something positive that TCHC can and should openly talk about, perhaps taking photos of some of the gardens for inclusion in newsletters, or their Annual Report to the Shareholder, posting on their website, demonstrating their support and encouraging more tenants to get actively involved in beautifying their communities.

Years ago, TCHC produced a Community Gardening Manual which was tenant friendly, easy to read and gave tenants guidelines on how to plan, design and build an inclusive community garden.

Unfortunately, portions of community gardens are destroyed on a regular basis, when this happens, Tenants may mention it to the Superintendent, who to be fair, would not consider this to be a priority in the course of their work.

The Landscapers do not have the expertise to understand the difference between a weed and a flower. This results in anger and frustration for tenants when they discover their garden has been destroyed.

The Ombudsman was right in that there are no set procedures for gardening in our communities. Some work really well, others, not so much.

In response to the Ombudsman’s investigation, the ELT created and approved an Interim Gardening Policy and Procedure for Community Gardens for 2024 and posted it on the website in July. It is common knowledge that Universal

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Gardening Day typically starts on the May 24 weekend. It's a one-size fits all temporary Policy that meets the needs of management, but not the tenants.

The Shareholders Agreement requires Tenant Consultation when developing Tenant Policies and Procedures – Tenants should not be an after thought. I understand tenant consultation will occur at a later date.

My initial reaction to the Interim Policy is that it feels more like “Policing Community Gardening”, requiring tenants to fill in a Formal Application to apply for a plot and sign a Community Gardening Agreement. The Interim Policy creates new rules and regulations effectively taking the joy out of gardening. It's one small thing in life that tenants have a choice about in their community.

This is an annual Tenant Engagement activity. The CSC's are responsible to ensure appropriate space is used, that each community has a fair, equitable and inclusive process that provides all tenants the opportunity to garden. I think TCHC over reacted and went too far. We did not need a formal policy per se, we simply needed Tenant Guidelines and staff support.

It is a privilege afforded to tenants by TCHC to be permitted to do gardening on their properties. It improves the curb appeal of the property and tenants take great pride in their work. It's a win-win for both.

I note the list indicates this item will be removed from the next tracker. So before it disappears ...

I would ask the Governance Committee to request the Interim Policy for Community Gardens be referred to the TSC as an Action Item for future discussion as this is a Tenant Engagement program.

Thank you for your consideration.