

Friends Housing Inc.

A Registered Charitable Organization
#102 163 045 RR0001

100-890 Sturgeon Road
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2Y0L2
204-953-1160 (ph)
204-953-1162 (fax)
fhousing@shaw.ca (email)
friendshousinginc.ca (website)

Friends Family Communique - Issue #15 (November 2021)

Board Update

Despite looking forward to a public **Annual General Meeting** including tenants and family members this year (possibly at the church next door), the Board decided, at its September Board meeting that the time was not right for a large gathering - COVID cases were rising slightly in Manitoba and Crystal felt tenants were still a little nervous about group gatherings. So, like last year, our AGM was held as part of the regular Board meeting (October 22). The existing group of directors will continue in their positions. For a copy of the AGM minutes and/or financial statements, contact Crystal at 204-832-2254 (ph) or friendshousing.cp@gmail.com (email).

Identifying an urgent need for **new Board members**, we put a notice in four consecutive issues of the weekly “Volunteering” section in Monday’s Winnipeg Free Press (October 25 - November 15). We would particularly like to get some younger members to ensure the healthy future of governance. A background in accounting, law, fundraising and/or mental health would be great but not required. Board experience is not necessary; enthusiasm is. If you know anyone willing to join the board - a friend, family member or even yourself, contact Crystal or John Gosselin, Board Chair at 204-488-1237 (ph) or jgosseli@mymts.net (email).

Board representatives Jane Smith and John Gosselin hosted a “**Meet and Greet**” with Tenants on October 12 in order to help establish good Board-Tenant Relations. We encouraged people to sign up for time slots to reduce numbers in the Common Room. Seven tenants attended. We received feedback on improvements they would like to see and problems they were having. One key outcome: two tenants volunteered to become part of the Executive of the Tenants’ Association, helping ensure residents once again have a voice at Board meetings.

As well, work continues on securing **financial support** once our funding agreement with Manitoba Housing expires in 2024. The Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association (MNPHA) recently studied this province-wide issue and determined that government will need to provide funding going forward - and do so primarily by increasing funding directly to tenants vs. funding landlords (such as Friends Housing). With there being a few provincial streams currently funding tenants, we are now determining how those levels would be increased if Friends Housing was no longer a “subsidized” landlord. We have also been advised that there will be funds available for direct support to Friends, but the form and amount has yet to be decided. We are now looking into what funding existing streams could provide and the shortfall it would leave; once done, we will lobby for support to cover the shortfall.

Building Update

With the **rooftop ventilation system** replacement now complete, we should be good for another 30 years.

Suite inspections done in July highlighted several needed improvements - with about half of the suites having some area(s) in fair or poor condition. A few factors contributed to this unfortunate situation - a misunderstanding on the Board's part of the frequency of the property manager's detailed condition inspections (ie. is done every 4 years) and the intent of its annual fire inspections (ie. to ensure properly working fire safety systems and a quick visual review of suites for safety access only), combined with not adequately accounting for the infrequent turnover of suites at Friends Housing (a good thing), a time normally used for suite renovation. We are now working to address the situation - prioritizing areas of greatest need, getting cost estimates and finding funding. This will be a significant project for the Board and Management. Dennis Perko, Board member is heading this up. His contact details are: 204-254-4404 (ph) and dkperko1@mymts.net (email).

What also came to light in the suite inspections, and subsequently from a family member, were a few cases of serious **cleanliness and hoarding issues**. Crystal and Dana have always paid attention to this in their day-to-day interactions with residents, but the Board realizes it needs to manage the oversight of this - the goal being to help ensure safe and healthy living conditions for ALL residents. And though the intent is NOT to interfere with residents' lives, this may, in serious situations, require the Board gaining access to check suites. This will be a standing agenda item of each Board meeting going forward for the foreseeable future.

For more information, contact John (see contact details above).

Residents' Activities Update

In addition to the regular activities, there were special events centred around two holidays in October: a traditional Thanksgiving meal was prepared and delivered to all residents to enjoy in their suites (October 8), small Halloween treat bags were delivered to residents (October 29); and interested residents paid their way, joining our van trip to "Boo At The Zoo" at Assiniboine Park, with a pre-zoo stop to pick up a takeout dinner (October 29).

As well, residents who signed up got their flu shot at our building's "flu clinic" (October 28).

Upcoming Activities include: trip to Signatures Handmade Market (November 25); Christmas Crafts, Christmas Movies and a possible trip to Canad Inns' Winter Wonderland drive-thru light show (in December). As well in December, there will be a Christmas Dinner for residents (date TBA). For more information, contact Crystal (contact details above) or Dana at 204-953-1161 (ph) or friendshousing.dh@gmail.com (email).

Staff Update

We continue to have our temporary caretaker, Reg look after our building cleaning and maintenance. He works 4 hours every weekday, generally from about 9:30am to 1:30pm. A permanent replacement has not yet been found.

Friends Family Holiday Celebration

The Board, at its October Board meeting, felt that it could not go ahead at that time with concrete plans for a large group indoor celebration (or some somewhat reduced version of it) - COVID conditions then and in the foreseeable future being quite uncertain. A final decision was tabled until its next (ie. November 26) board meeting. If there will be an event, families will be promptly notified.

Friends Housing Profile*: Jane Smith, Board Member

Tell us a little about your history with Friends Housing.

What (or rather, who) got me involved - back in about 1991 - was my son. He was “at the right place at the right time” to secure a recently vacated suite at Friends Housing. Less than a year later, I was on the Board (I had some previous Board experience) - and then later that year, I was asked by the Chairman, Zivey Feldman if I would assume the Chair position. What followed was a 10-12 year stint as Chairperson, a year break and then accepting an invitation to return to the Board. In all, it’s been about 30 years.

In 2019, you were Board Liaison for chronicling Friends Housing’s history into what became “The Story of Friends Housing” released that fall. Tell us a little about a Board project or two that’s kept you busy since?

My role on the Board at this point is primarily that of advisor. Helping gather information for the writing of the story of Friends Housing highlighted how so many of the details of our organization’s past have been “lost” over the years. I hope my current involvement helps provide some background and context to the current Board to help in its decision-making.

I also take satisfaction that during my time as chairperson, the Board was instrumental in a couple of projects - one being the conversion of what was under-utilized parking lot space into what is now the building’s Gym/Fitness Room and Art Room, two all-season spaces for residents’ use; the other being the establishment of a Tenants’ Committee to encourage and enable the tenants themselves to take some control over their activities/events.

What do you see as the two biggest challenges facing the Board today?

One major challenge is the financial situation of the organization. Readers will know from recent issues of Friends Family Communique (including this one) that the Board is actively addressing this situation to ensure stability for residents. We know how important safe, quality, affordable housing is to a person’s physical and mental wellbeing.

The second one is having new members join the Board. I remember Friends Housing’s beginnings - in interviews with potential new residents, families were asked if a family member would consider sitting on the Board. It was an effective way to help share the load and allowed families to “give back” in time and expertise. If there is anyone who might be interested in joining the Board, I encourage him/her to contact our Board Chair, John.

*Friends Housing Profile is an ongoing series featuring Board members, staff, other volunteers and others who play - or have played - an important role in Friends Housing.

YOUR Support Helps Support Residents

With year end soon here, many people's thoughts turn to making charitable donations. Just a friendly reminder that Friends Housing relies on the kindness and generosity of its "friends and family" to support activities and/or amenities for residents. At our Board-Tenant "Meet and Greet," one suggestion put forward was a treadmill. We want to know what others would like to see. Please encourage your family member to share their thoughts and ideas on activities and/or amenities - either with fellow residents Brian, Iris or Sydney OR staff, ie. Crystal or Dana.

Large or small, all donations are greatly appreciated. Cheques, made out to "Friends Housing Inc." can be mailed or dropped off at the office (Attention: Crystal Phillips), while credit card or PayPal donations can be made through Canada Helps website (canadahelps.org). (Note: ; search "Friends Housing.") A receipt for income tax purposes will be happily provided.

New Van Update: The Board decided a new van was not a current priority - and it will consider a new larger sized van when COVID restrictions no longer restrict gathering size.

Holiday Hours

The office will be closed December 24, 27 and 28, open December 29 and 30, then closed again December 31 and January 3. Regular days/hours will resume January 4. However, please note too that Crystal will be on call from 9am - noon on December 24 and 31.

Wishing you and your family all the best for a healthy, happy holiday season - and year ahead.

- Board and Staff of Friends Housing

Next Issue: February 2022