

## Problems with illegal student housing back in councillor's court

By: Aldo Santin

Posted: 06/26/2015 1:21 PM |

Winnipeg Free Press

Politicians at city hall agree there are problems posed by illegal student housing surrounding the University of Manitoba but they're going to let the ward councillor solve the issue.

Members of the property and development committee accepted a detailed planning report on the student housing situation but accepted the document as information and gave no instructions to the administration on what to do about the issue.

Committee chairman Coun. John Orlikow said following up on the administrative report is now Coun. Janice Lukes' responsibility.

Orlikow (River Heights-Fort Garry) said there is the potential to create steering committees to discuss the issue further but any changes will have to be initiated by Lukes.

"We got a good framework for ideas on what other cities are doing but the next step will be looking at the specific areas that we need to deal with," Orlikow said. "Coun. Lukes will put (the issue) back on the committee agenda when she's ready once we have some more information on where it should go – is it a bylaw issue, is it a safety issue, is it a rezoning issue. She'll be able to put a big package together."

Fort Richmond residents have complained about a proliferation of illegal rooming houses sprouting up around the U of M campus, poorly maintained yards, parking issues, noise complaints and overcrowding conditions that breach fire codes and pose a safety threat.

The city's planning department prepared a detailed analysis of how other municipalities deal with problems associated with student housing.

Lukes (St. Norbert) conducted several media interviews this week to publicize the issue and appeared before the committee Friday morning.

Lukes said she'll be presenting a variety of possible action plans to the residents at an open house meeting in September.

Neighbours are annoyed because the rental properties are unkempt and there are problems with noisy parties. But Lukes said there are real safety concerns: lack of smoke and fire alarms; no fire extinguishers, inadequate number of exists; illegally converted space into bedrooms.

The administrative report doesn't propose any solution and there is no recommendation for a next step beyond assessing the current situation.

aldo.santin@freepress.mb.ca