

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CITY ADVISORY BOARD AND HALIFAX  
RELIEF COMMISSION

Relief Headquarters,  
May 29, 1913

Present- T.S. Rogers - Chairman  
Judge Wallace  
Mayor Hawkins  
Mr. Fowlke  
H.W. Johnston  
L. Fred Monaghan  
Controller Hines  
Controller Finlay  
R.P. Bell  
Alderman Godwin

Mayor Hawkins - Our Committee understood that you were going to have some definite statement to make with regard to the policy and we thought perhaps if you were ready with that, we would get it to-day; if not, we would take up some other matters.

T.S. Rogers - We are not quite ready; we are waiting for the Engineers.

Mayor Hawkins - That is the most important matter, but there are other matters. We want to make some arrangement about the placing of fire apparatus to protect those shacks of yours on the Common and Exhibition. We are prepared to put apparatus within easy reach or on the Exhibition grounds, and it would be available for fires in other places as well. It is important to have facilities for fighting fires. It is time there was something done, for if a fire breaks out in these places, there might be great loss of life and property.

R.P. Bell - We supply labor, and night watchman.

Mayor Hawkins- You think that is sufficient?

H.W. Johnston- The Commission also agreed to put up a building to store the apparatus in the Exhibition grounds.

T.S. Rogers- Did you do it?

H.W. Johnston- It was thought advisable to wait until the new chemical engine came and put it in that office building of Cavicchi & pagano where it would be central, but since then, the fire chief has reported that this would not be satisfactory - that it would be better to have it in the Exhibition grounds.

T.S. Rogers - We wont put up a building if it can possibly be avoided.

Mayor Hawkins- It would be a temporary building only.

H.W. Johnston - Part of the stable could be altered to do it.

Controller Finlay - You want a place for firemen to sleep.

T.S. Rogers - Do you expect us to pay for it?

Mayor Hawkins- No, I do not think so. It is part of our own protection. We want you to give us accommodation for them so that they can be available for your own buildings.

Controller Finlay- We would not charge you for the apparatus and

firemen, but we would expect the Commission to provide shelter. We will send four firemen and piece of apparatus, to be on duty night and day.

Mayor Hawkins- They would be available for any fires outside. It never entered our minds to charge you for it.

T.S.Rogers- What was in my mind was whether or not we should go to the expense of providing fireman. This thing has come upon the City, and there is no reason why we should spend money to protect these houses.

Mayor Hawkins - We had a fire station on Gottingen St. but it was damaged by the explosion and has been abandoned. If you are satisfied to have the apparatus and firemen at the West St. engine house that is all we need say about it.

T.S.Rogers - What would it cost to provide shelter.

H.W.Johnston - If we altered the stable, you would have to put up a small building for these four men. They have to get their meals there.

Controller Hines-We are putting four men on the chemicals, so that two men can operate it. Sleeping quarters is all you need.

Mayor Hawkins- There are a number of places that are being used as storehouses on Main Avenue. They have been there for months.

R.P. Bell - They are assigned to various families and the goods stored there are the household goods of these people.

T.S.Rogers - We do not object to giving fair fire protection but we are setting our faces against any more temporary expenditure of this sort. We shall ask our superintendent to go with Mr. Johnston and report as to the cost.

Mayor Hawkins - Another matter would be in connection with the Market Building.

R.P.Bell - We only received your letter this morning. There has not been a meeting to bring it up yet.

L.F. Monaghan- About engineer Wells of the Patricia.

Controller Hines- We have been paying his salary right along. He should be handed over to the Relief Commission.

T.S.Rogers- Is he entitled to compensation from your fund?

L.F. Monaghan- The Superannuation has not been in existence long enough. It has not matured yet.

Mayor Hawkins - He is just out of the hospital and has been very badly injured. His right arm is permanently injured.

Controller Hines- I do not think he will ever be fit for service again. He is a man about 35 years of age, and received \$20 a week.

Mayor Hawkins - Some of my constituents in the north end of the City met with very serious losses in their animals. Two of them lost their horses, and a horse is often a man's livelihood, and they have made claims and have received no consideration. Carvery and Howe are their names.

T.S.Rogers - Why were these horses not allowed for?

Mr. Fowlke- Because they were not killed in the explosion -

they died.

Mayor Hawkins - They died from the effects of the explosion. A man's color should not make any difference.

Judge Wallace- What are the actual facts?

Mayor Hawkins - The flying missiles struck his horse. The roof of the barn broke through and the horse was struck. One horse lived some little time but died eventually. Because he could not bring the piece of the Mont Plane or the railway track that killed the animal, there is no reason to say the animal was not killed by it.

T.S.Rogers- Our men have common sense - if they are satisfied that the horse was killed on account of the explosion, that settles it. We shall have it enquired into.

Ald. Godwin- There is one question the people are asking in the North end, and that is, if there is any appeal from the appraisal value put on the properties.

T.S.Rogers - No.

Mayor Hawkins- A lot of the appraisals, to my mind, where the land has been included, have been extremely small, but the bulk of the people who have appealed to me, are willing to be satisfied if they have their house put back. They do not want money at all. They say if you put back a house of the same size, capacity, whether of wood, concrete or stucco, they will be satisfied.

T.S.Rogers- There are some people who had frail structures two and three stories high, and we went under any circumstances restore them. We would be ashamed to have them in the City. We wont do that. The whole question of restoring these cheap houses is a very difficult one. A great many places are valued about \$1800 to \$2000 which can only be restored at a much higher cost. The architects are studying now with a view to advising us what can be done. The first report of the architects dealt with the subject generally, but I am afraid it is going to be difficult to meet the situation. We have asked them to design some houses of wood just to meet the suggestion that the Mayor is now making. A good many of these people had no bath rooms or heating, and if they do not want to improve their conditions there is no reason why we should insist on it. Every case must be dealt with on its own merits, and it is going to be a tremendous task. What we have been doing for some time has been to get the Committee to go around and ask these people what they want and bring in on cards the information they can get. Then if we know there are fifty people who have houses valued at \$2000 and want them restored, we let a contract to have them restored at a good deal less cost than they could build them themselves.

Mayor Hawkins- You take a house that was destroyed - it may have cost \$2000, but to replace it even with a frail structure would cost \$4000. Why should they be burdened with that extra cost? Evidently your valuation is on the previous cost.

T.S.Rogers- The basis is the market value on Dec. 6th

Mayor Hawkins- Here is an instance - A man named Beuree had a house on the upper side of Union Street. The house was 2 years old, was built on a lot 145 feet front. He had 388 feet of radiator surface, and hot water boiler- bathroom and modern plumbing throughout. Brodie built the house for him in the first

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place and has made him an offer to rebuild the house for \$4000. He was offered for his house \$3500, furniture and all.

Judge Wallace- That would not include his furniture. When was the appraisal made?

T.S.Rogers- May 16, 1918. The house was new and cost \$2600. It had hot water heating and plumbing.

Ald. Godwin- That would be an extra \$1000.

T.S.Rogers- It is no use to come to us - all we can say to you is that we have a Board of appraisers and they are doing the best they can. There is no legal liability on any person to pay anything. The Crown has seen fit to supplement the money by a large sum and it is impossible for this Commission to investigate every claim. We have called to our assistance the best men we know in the City and they are doing their best and working hard. If there are cases of injustice that are brought to our attention, we are not going to sit here as a court of appeal, or we would be here for the next ten years. We do not propose to allow the appraisals to be re-opened unless we are satisfied that there is grave injustice. The matter of these appraisements is a most difficult one, and there are sure to be injustices. We are not perfect and our committees are not perfect.

Ald. Godwin- Look at #22 Almon Street- compare it with any other house at all. It had about \$15 worth of plumbing in it and you put in between \$500 and \$600 worth of plumbing.

T.S.Rogers - He got too much, then?

Ald. Godwin- No-one who had property in the explosion of Dec. 6th got too much. Take the evidence of the tenants who were in the property previously, and see if I am not right. Almost every house in the district which was allowed to be in a dilapidated condition is in a better condition than before, and the consequence is that the man who lost his property has to pay for it.

T.S.Rogers- You had better wait until you see what the man who had a good house is going to get before you say that.

Ald. Godwin- I have seen the appraisals and I know. That is why I asked if there is no appeal.

Mayor Hawkins- It is unfortunate that you are not building now, for I don't know what you are going to do with all those people in the shacks in the winter.

H.W.Johnston- Those buildings are very warm.

Ald. Godwin - A man told me he could see between the boards.

H.W.Johnston- They were built on top of the frost, and of course have settled a little and will require some jacking up.

T.S.Rogers- I would like Ald. Godwin to occupy my position for about six weeks and see if he could satisfy the people. We have a survey of every building in that district- we have photographs of a good many of the houses and the people are surprised to find that we have these photographs. The building does not look as well in the photograph, sometimes, as it has been described by the owner. People exaggerate their losses and men honestly value their property a great deal more than it was worth, and sometimes dishonestly. The idea of some of them is that it must be exactly as it was before the explosion, painted the same, same number of rooms, everything the same. Our preparations are going on now very fast.

Mayor Hawkins- I think you ought to speed up, as the people are anxious to get back in their homes. They want some place they can call their own.

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T.S. Rogers- Everything is being speeded up. When we are ready and you agree with our general outline, I want you to help us, particularly Ald. Godwin who lives in the North End.

Mayor Hawkins -I think Ald. Godwin could give you a lot of help.

Cont. Finlay- There is a house at the corner of Merkel and North Creighton St. which has been appraised at \$940. Ald. Parker says he cannot begin to put that house back for less than \$2800. What can a man do with \$940. He is willing to pay that house back as it was. The four walls are there. It is on the eastern side of North Creighton St. He wants the building back just as it was. He has a piece of land 100 feet square. His name is Verge.

T.S. Rogers- Do you think we had better build any cheap shacks like that? I spose the man had no bathroom or heating.

Cont. Finlay- He had a toilet in the house and plumbing- no bath.

City Clerk- What these people fear is that the City will tax them if they get a good house - that they will have to pay more taxes.

T.S. Rogers- Then we are to build them a shack to save taxes? Surely you do not want us to be responsible for restoring shacks?

Mayor Hawkins- If you are not going to restore shacks, what are you going to do? They cannot do anything with your appraisement.

T.S. Rogers- There are not many cases like that.

Mayor Hawkins- Yes there are - How can a man put up anything but a shack, with the money you give him. Something must be done - the winter is coming on. On that Hungry Hill district they were nearly all shacks, but they were their homes and were comfortable. My idea, instead of making the appraisements would be to go ahead and build something. Say to them that here are houses on another piece of land in another district- tell them you will give them one of them in lieu of their property. Build a block of them. Have the houses built so that when they come wanting some place to go, you will have something to offer them.

T.S. Rogers- That means taking the property, and the minute we do that there will be a fuss. Last week we consulted with fifty people showing them designs of houses to see what they wanted. When we get enough of them, we can build. We have had architects working night and day for three weeks. We have to get plans and get certain lands in order to develop them.

Mayor Hawkins- What I am afraid of is that if this goes on much longer they will be leaving the City. We cannot afford to lose these people. There should be every inducement held out to them to stay. A number of valuable people have gone away. The retailer is going to lose if these people go - the City will lose as a corporation.

T.S. Rogers- We have taken precautions to keep every citizen possible here in the City. We held back because we felt they would stay with their money. The economic loss of this disaster to the City is more than the material loss.

Mayor Hawkins- Every family that goes away is a loss. They are pretty hard to replace.