

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND CHILD CARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
NOTES

Tuesday, January 11, 2022
Electronic and in Meeting Room G
Lower Level, City Hall

PRESENT:

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy	Chair*
Ms. Tanis Anderson	Representative, School District 40*
Mr. Blaine Kane	Representative, Indigenous Advocacy or Social Service Organization*
Ms. Hortensia Moreno	Community Member
Ms. Iulia Sincaian	Community Member
Ms. Betina Wheeler	Representative, Homelessness Coalition Society*

ABSENT:

Mr. Wes Everaars	Community Member
Ms. Jennifer Fane	Community Member
Ms. Stephanie Erdelyi	Representative, Child Care Advocacy Organization
Ms. Briana Harris	Community Member
Ms. Jayne Ogundehinde	Community Member
Ms. Andii Stephens	Community Member/Alternate Chair*

STAFF PRESENT:

Ms. Claudia Freire	Housing and Social Planner
Mr. Anur Mehdic	Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst
Ms. Carilyn Cook	Committee Clerk

*Denotes electronic attendance

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Councillor McEvoy, Chair, opened the meeting at 5:37 p.m. noting that quorum had not been achieved.

Councillor McEvoy recognized that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples and acknowledged that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. He recognized that, as a city, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

None.

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

3.1 September 7, 2021

3.2 November 9, 2021 Notes

Procedural note: As quorum was not achieved, adoption of the September 7, 2021 and November 9, 2021 minutes was deferred to the next meeting of the Affordable Housing and Child Care Advisory Committee.

4. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

4.1 Homelessness Action Strategy Update

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, commenced with the first part of the PowerPoint presentation update on the Homelessness Action Strategy which outlined the contributing factors to homelessness and the City's previous, current, and planned actions to address homelessness in the city.

In response to a question from the Committee, Anur Mehdić, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst advised that staff have been working closely with Community Action Network (CAN) leaders who have lived and living experience around homelessness. He noted that the need for upstream supports, those that address the problem at its root, has become very apparent, as short-term actions do not help the long-term homelessness issues, and that the pandemic has brought many issues to the forefront.

In response to the questions, "What are your observations with regard to the homelessness situation in New Westminster?" and, "What factors do you believe are contributing to the increase in homelessness in New Westminster?" Committee members noted the following:

- There are noticeably fewer people on the street since the Emergency Response Centre opened;
- Although the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) put more money in people's hands, they may still be behind on their rent due to ingrained habits. Some people have lost their jobs but still try to maintain a certain lifestyle which they can no longer afford;
- The price of everything is going up, pushing those who were on the poverty line before the pandemic, over the edge;
- Participation in the subsidized lunch programs at schools has doubled in the last year;
- Homelessness has noticeably increased over the years;
- Months ago many organizations thought we may be coming out of the pandemic and did not plan for where we are now;
- A long-term plan needs to be in place for when shelters are unable to operate at full capacity;
- The Fraser Health Authority has been very challenged during the pandemic;
- There is a real need for a presence on the street with the increase in drug issues, as it is much worse than it was previously;
- There is a feeling of hopelessness and isolation on the street that was not there before with the added fear of transmission of the virus, especially for those who are already vulnerable and at risk; and,
- The lack of mental health outreach on the street is evident and must be addressed soon.

Ms. Freire continued with the second part of the PowerPoint presentation update on the Homelessness Action Strategy, which addressed the purpose, and key objectives of the Strategy, key partners, the three phases of the Strategy, and proposed timeline.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Freire and Mr. Mehdic provided the following comments:

- Information and engagement opportunities will be accessible on the city's Be Heard website in the near future and the City's Manager of Public Engagement will engage the wider community; and,
- Staff are striving to keep the human touch in engagement for the Strategy and will have more one on one interviews with those that have lived and living experience with homelessness, and possibly develop surveys, all of which is being undertaken with CAN leaders.

A Committee member advised of the importance of receiving feedback from those currently living on the street in order to determine what is really needed to support

them; therefore, an outreach strategy must include engaging as many segments of the community as possible.

4.2 Climate Change Repercussions for Unsheltered and Vulnerable Populations

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, provided a PowerPoint presentation on Climate Change Repercussions for Unsheltered and Vulnerable Populations which outlined the various challenges that have arisen due to climate change, and key findings and proposed policy considerations.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Mehdic provided the following comments:

- This issue highlights that more systemic approaches, especially around housing, need to be implemented;
- The approach taken to address these issues must be multi-jurisdictional as cities will not be able to address them alone;
- Some of the policies that staff were working on prior to these recent extreme events, such as the Community Energy and Emissions Plan, address these issues and the impact that climate change will have on the vulnerable; and,
- The COVID-19 At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations and COVID-19 Seniors and Persons Living with Disabilities Task Forces were created at the onset of the pandemic and, during the extreme heat event, the City was able to utilize those contacts to respond to those crises. The City's relationships with the faith-based and non-profit organizations on those Task Forces has strengthened throughout the pandemic.

Discussion ensued, and Committee members provided the following comments:

- It would be ideal if organizations could stock up on resources such as water and other goods in order to be prepared for the next extreme event; however, that takes funding and space to store the supplies which many organizations do not have;
- Some of the unsheltered population come to New Westminster as they find it to be safer;
- The vulnerable population are the ones that suffer the most and this has been a particularly difficult year and a half for them;
- The opening of Skwo:wech Elementary School has been hindered due to the delay in the arrival of supplies;
- The School District is also working on a climate action plan;

- The City may be able to look to churches to provide more localized cooling facilities during future extreme heat events;
- A cooling site is needed in the Brow of Hill area of the City as it was hit particularly hard during the heat wave; and,
- The churches that are currently going through the redevelopment process anticipate being able to help, be engaged, and be accessible to the broader community and the City should support these goals in any way they can.

4.3 Seniors Integrated Support Pilot Project at Ross Tower - Overview of the Emergency Preparedness Component

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, shared a PowerPoint presentation on the Seniors Integrated Support Pilot Project and the Hey Neighbour Collective, both of which will address emergency preparedness and social connectedness for seniors.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Mehdic provided the following comments:

- It is hoped that strong evaluation and documentation of the Project will secure further funding and create a case to apply learnings to other buildings, although, currently, it is challenging with the pandemic as to how things can move forward; and,
- The City is in the process of printing waterproof and pocket-sized Survival Resource Guides that list the locations of shelters and food resources. These will be shared in the community.

Discussion ensued, and Committee members provided the following comments:

- Every building would benefit from this kind of program which will teach people the importance of building neighbour relations and taking care of each other; and,
- We must consider how to manage when disaster events happen concurrently such as the extreme heat event that took place during the pandemic.

4.4 Overview of Child Care Supports

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, shared a PowerPoint presentation which provided an overview of Child Care Supports including the Affordable Child Care Benefit, the Child Care Operating Funding – Base Funding, the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative, the Early Childhood Educator Wage

Enhancement, the Childcare BC Maintenance Fund, and start up grants that are available for those interested in opening a licensed child care facility.

Discussion ensued, and Committee members provided the following comments:

- People should be made aware of the Affordable Child Care Benefit calculator which can be used to determine what you are entitled to;
- School age child care is a real need and, unfortunately, a lot of benefits do not apply for kids in this category;
- It is important to, in communication documents, explain the monetary aspect of things by showing people the different levels of funding and how they may be affected by them;
- Many people are unaware of the monetary supports that they are qualified to receive; and,
- Affordable child care issues include meeting the needs of disabled children and continued prioritization of child care amenities in new developments.

5. NEW BUSINESS

None.

6. UPCOMING MEETINGS

March 8, 2022

7. END OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 7:09 p.m.

Certified Correct,

Original Signed
Councillor Jaimie McEvoy

Original Signed
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk