

SENIORS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

November 9, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.
Council Chamber Meeting Room, City Hall

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillor Patrick Johnstone	- Chair
Helen Bodner	- Community Member
Lois Brassart	- Community Member
Calvin Donnelly	- Sapperton Old Age Pensioners' Association Representative
Leanne Frechette	- Fraser Health Representative
Sylvester Helmink	- Queensborough 50+ Social Club Representative
Betty McIntosh	- Senior Services Society Representative
Elizabeth Philip	- Century House Association
Ron Zapp	- Community Member

MEMBERS REGRETS:

Rosemary Dunne	- Community Member
Ann Griffiths	- Community Member
Julia Schoennagel	- Community Member

GUEST:

Kara-Leigh Bloch	- Seniors Services Society
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STAFF PRESENT:

John Stark	- Acting Manager of Planning
Robyn McGuinness	- Manager of Seniors and Youth Services
Heather Corbett	- Committee Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 2:02 p.m.

1.0 ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

1.1 Adoption of November 9, 2017 Agenda

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the agenda of the November 9, 2017 Seniors Advisory Committee meeting be adopted as presented.

CARRIED.

All members of the Committee present voted in favour of the motion.

2.0 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

2.1 Adoption of September 14, 2017 Minutes

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the minutes of the September 14, 2017 Seniors Advisory Committee meeting be adopted.

CARRIED.

All members of the Committee present voted in favour of the motion.

3.0 PRESENTATIONS

3.1 Seniors Housing Issues

Mr. John Stark introduced Ms. Kara-Leigh Bloch of the Seniors Services Society (SSS), who discussed the Society's role in aiding seniors in the City who may be experiencing housing issues and looking for assistance.

Ms. Bloch reviewed an on-table handout about the Seniors Services Society's housing statistics in Metro Vancouver, including the following:

- Approximately 2,550 seniors across Metro Vancouver have received one-on-one housing support and information in the last year;
- 765 seniors were referred to SSS in New Westminister in the last year, which is common, as SSS is located in the City;
- Many seniors refer themselves to agencies such as the Seniors Services Society, and some 12% are referred by hospitals and health units;
- Approximately 600 seniors were turned away by the SSS last year, 30% of which were from New Westminister;
- In the Metro Vancouver homeless count earlier in 2017, 23% of the homeless population were deemed to be seniors (age 55+), which was higher than recent years; and,
- 43% of seniors who are renting are living at the poverty level – this can be as a result of paying more than 30% of their income in rent.

Ms. Bloch also offered some comments on the Seniors Services Society's programs and the types of assistance it provides:

- Some of the services offered by the Seniors Services Society include connecting with seniors, prioritizing their income and health needs and providing assistance with finding housing;
- Often seniors are referred to the Lookout Society by SSS, but resources can be very limited; and,
- SSS is looking at its operations and resources available to help in receiving and dealing with more severe cases of homelessness, such as its temporary housing program (in partnership with BC Housing), where SSS partners with landlords and becomes the tenant in order to provide shelter for a senior – this is seen as a dignified alternative to traditional shelters.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Stark and Ms. Bloch provided the following information:

- There are no longer any temporary BC Housing units in New Westminster*;
- Temporary BC Housing units that would be available to New Westminster residents are scattered throughout five buildings in North and South Burnaby;
- The City is currently working on an inclusionary housing policy that would change the Local Government Act to allow the City to require a certain percentage of non-market rental units be built in new developments. The percentage of these units has not yet been confirmed; however, the aim would be to allow developers to make a profit while also make non-market units available and affordable; and,
- The vacancy rate in New Westminster is approximately 0.03%, while a healthy rate is 3-4%.

Discussion ensued, and the Committee members offered the following comments on housing issues:

- As a high proportion of seniors likely want to occupy a home of their own (as opposed to assisted living), a range of different options needs to be offered, and an increase in subsidized, supported housing is what is needed and desired;
- There is a need for new non-market housing, however subsidization of existing housing, and ongoing maintenance of these, is also of high priority;
- There appears to be a supply gap in the market in that there is aging housing stock and new housing stock and very little that was built in between;
- Housing operators often defer maintenance on a building in order to keep rents low;
- While housing costs have risen, income levels have not matched the pace, resulting in subsidies being over-accessed; and,
- An increase in emotional impact has been observed by the peer counselling unit at Century House as a result of housing stress.

MOVED AND SECONDED

Whereas the City of New Westminster is a senior-friendly and inclusive community, be it resolved:

THAT the Seniors Advisory Committee recommend that Council communicate with other levels of government with regards to:

- *Developing an affordable housing strategy for seniors in New Westminster;*
- *Protecting and maintaining the existing stock of non-market, affordable senior housing in the City;*

* At the March 8, 2018 meeting it was noted that this information was reported incorrectly. There are temporary Housing units in New Westminster*

- *Encouraging ongoing upgrades and maintenance of the above-mentioned housing stock;*
- *Developing new non-market, affordable housing and subsidies for seniors in order to plan for the future;*
- *Providing housing outreach and support for high proportions of seniors living alone; and,*
- *Ensuring that all new housing initiatives include adequate provision for senior populations affected by income shortages.*

CARRIED.

All members of the Committee present voted in favour of the motion.

Councillor Johnstone thanked the committee for the discussion and mentioned that Mayor Coté and other Councillors had recently made a visit to Victoria and spoken with Hon. Selina Robinson, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in order to convey the City’s priorities for the Provincial Budget, which had included housing.

4.0 NEW BUSINESS

4.1 Housing Update with a Focus on Seniors

Mr. John Stark reviewed the on-table document entitled “Social Development Partnership Opportunities” which was given to the Provincial Government, and highlighted the following sections in the report:

- Two City sites which could offer potential affordable housing projects;
- Possible actions in relation to housing affordability challenges; and,
- Possible actions endorsed by UBCM in regards to renovations and fixed term leases.

5.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

5.1 Seniors Festival Recap: October 21, 2017

Ms. Lois Brassart, Chair of the Seniors Festival Committee, reported that the Festival had been very successful and thanked the City, Mayor and Council for the grant and for their participation. Ms. Brassart further reported the following:

- The Committee held a lively wrap-up discussion and had many suggestions for next year’s event;
- In total, the Festival attracted 1100 attendees and 39 exhibitors – all were pleased with the involvement and engagement;
- Red Robinson was a popular speaker and created much “buzz”; and,
- The grab bags from the City were much appreciated.

Ms. Robyn McGuinness, Manager of Seniors and Youth Services, thanked the Committee, and applauded the changes made to the Festival, such as the marketplace.

Councillor Johnstone thanked the committee and complimented the event's success.

5.2 Age Friendly Community Strategy Designation and Recognition

Mr. John Stark, Acting Manager of Planning, updated the Committee on the City's Age Friendly Community Strategy Designation, reporting that the application had been completed and would be sent off shortly. They had received 130 recommendations and had narrowed them down to 35.

Mr. Stark indicated that the applications would be reviewed in batches and therefore they would likely receive confirmation of the designation in February or March. The resulting financial award could be put towards the Seniors Festival or given as an award and, once the process is complete, the City will be recognized as an age-friendly community.

5.3 Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan Update

Mr. John Stark, Acting Manager of Planning, updated the Committee on the City's Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan, including the following actions:

- Council will be recognizing Alzheimer's Awareness month in January;
- Staff will be looking at staging an event in 2018, possibly similar to last year, which was a movie screening relevant to dementia;
- Staff will be looking at giving an orientation to the New Westminster Design Panel on dementia-friendly design and what to look for when evaluating proposals; and,
- Staff will be meeting with the Parks and Recreation department and other City departments on how the overall actions will be coordinated.

Councillor Johnstone indicated that the City is looking at the design of its public spaces as part of the dementia-friendly discussion. The new concession in Queen's Park is an example of this.

On a related note, Councillor Johnstone updated the Committee members on the latest developments with the Canada Games Pool/Centennial Community Centre project, and reported that more details would be forthcoming in the new year.

A committee member mentioned that they had recently read a report from Vancity about financial abuse and seniors, which stated that this is still a prevalent issue. It was suggested that Vancity and possibly a representative from the New Westminster Police Department could attend a future meeting to discuss this issue.

6.0 REPORTS

6.1 Seniors Services Society:

Ms. Betty McIntosh reported that the Seniors Services Society had recently held a two-day workshop on governance with its new Board members, run by Vantage Point. Ms. McIntosh also reported that the Society's recent fundraiser "Evening in Tuscany" had been very successful.

7.0 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting date was still to be determined at the time of the meeting.

8.0 ADJOURNMENT

ON MOTION, the meeting was adjourned at 3:31 p.m.

Certified correct,

PATRICK JOHNSTONE
CHAIR

HEATHER CORBETT
COMMITTEE CLERK