

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND CHILD CARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AHCCAC)

Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

**Meeting held electronically under Ministerial Order No. M192/2020 and the
current Order of the Provincial Health Officer *Gatherings and Events***

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy	- Chair, City Council Member
Tanis Anderson	- Representative, School District 40
Brian Curry	- Community Member
Jennifer Fane	- Community Member
Briana Harris	- Community Member
Iulia Sincaian	- Community Member
Betina Wheeler	- Representative, Homelessness Coalition Society

MEMBERS REGRETS:

Justin Byers	- Representative, BC Housing
Stephanie Erdelyi	- Representative, Child Care Advocacy Organization
Wes Everaars	- Community Member
Blaine Kane	- Representative, Indigenous Advocacy or Social Service Organization
Hortensia Moreno	- Community Member
Jayne Ogundehinde	- Community Member
Andii Stephens	- Community Member

GUEST

Margaret Eberle	- Housing Consultant
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STAFF PRESENT:

Claudia Freire	- Housing / Social Planner
Anur Mehdic	- Housing / Child Care Planning Analyst
Heather Corbett	- Committee Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. The Committee did a round of introductions.

1.0 ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

No changes were made to the agenda.

2.0 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

3.1 Adoption of the Minutes of the Affordable Housing and Child Care Advisory Committee of April 13, 2021

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Minutes of the April 13, 2021 Affordable Housing and Child Care Advisory Committee meeting be adopted.

CARRIED.

All Committee members present voted in favour of the motion.

3.0 PRESENTATIONS

None

4.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

4.1 Housing Needs Report Workshop

Claudia Freire, Housing/Social Planner, and Margaret Eberle, Consultant, provided a PowerPoint presentation about the City's draft Housing Needs Report.

Ms. Eberle highlighted the following points:

- Background, process and timelines of the Housing Needs Report;
- Definitions of key terms found within the Report;
- Highlights of the draft Report
- Groups affected by housing challenges, including homeless, renters, and prospective homeowners; and,
- Key findings and gaps by housing type and population.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Eberle provided the following information:

- Housing needs for couples and families are contained within the analysis of the family housing type; and,
- The draft Report indicates that the effects of the pandemic on the housing market are not entirely known yet.

The Committee provided the following answers in response to the question:

1. *What New Westminster housing issue most concerns you, and why?*

- Homelessness and lack of shelter;
- The amount of new homeless people on the street;

- The economic impacts of the pandemic, making people homeless by circumstance;
- Increase in demand and resulting density, which is being reflected in an increase in density at schools;
- Lack of home ownership affordability and families leaving the Metro Vancouver region due to lack of affordability;
- Impacts of affordability on the retirement aged population who may need to downsize, but may not be able to afford smaller apartments and will need to leave the community;
- Maintaining residency in the City for long-term residents and the elderly who may not want to relocate elsewhere; and,
- Community conflicts about housing and the effects on the Public Hearing process.

2. *What should be done? How could these concerns be addressed?*

- Increase co-ops or similar types of community housing, with realistic income levels requirements;
- Ensure a living wage throughout the region;
- Increase the availability of market and below-market housing;
- Increase the amount of developments like the Aboriginal Land Trust (ALT) Sixth Street project to provide housing for target community groups;
- As new developments are proposed, develop a method to approve affordable, non-market developments faster; and,
- Be more innovative and support a variety of housing options within the same development, geared to income.

Committee members provided the following comments:

- It may be an oversight not to include some mention in the Housing Needs Report of the effects of the pandemic and the 2020-2021 period on the housing landscape in the City, particularly as many businesses are noticing an increase in homelessness, and shelters are at full capacity;
- It would be important to address the subject of holding public hearings on matters of social housing, as often they become more about the potential residents of a proposed building than about land use issues;
- It would be important to acknowledge BC Housing and the successful projects they have developed through the community housing fund; and,
- It would be important for Council to play a key role in engaging with upper levels of Government, developing partnerships and finding solutions to the draft Report findings.

5.1 City of New Westminster Homelessness Response Strategy

Anur Mehdic, Housing / Child Care Planning Analyst, started the discussion by asking the Committee to respond to the question “*Have you noticed an increase in homelessness and other social issues since the onset of the pandemic*”, to which the Committee noted an overwhelming positive response.

The Committee provided the following comments in response to the question:

1. *If so, what do you see as some of the impacts of this increase?*

- An urgent need to find appropriate housing for the entrenched homeless and to recognize the opioid crisis and the increase in deaths;
- People are fearful of and uncomfortable around the homeless;
- Staff at shelters are at full capacity, including in shelters in other locations such as in Sapperton and on 12th Street;
- Increase in isolation with no access to the internet and support groups;
- Informal help (such as monetary and food handouts) has been reduced due to fear of COVID transmission; and,
- It has become obvious that social emergencies, such as the opioid crisis, do not have as big of an impetus for government response as physical health emergencies (like COVID) or political/societal emergencies (like war).

Mr. Mehdic provided a presentation on the City’s short-term and long-term solutions to homelessness, including the following measures:

- Accessing government funding for community-based health and welfare initiatives;
- Responding to business and resident complaints, including research into increased sanitation options within the City;
- Working with faith-based and non-profit organizations to expand outreach and advocacy services;
- Providing additional shelter capacity and long-term supportive housing; and,
- Expanding staff resources at the City and increased corporate coordination among City departments.

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

- Laundry programs have been organized and provided through the pandemic’s community-based support initiatives; however, there has been very little uptake because people do not have enough clothing to launder; and,

- Free menstrual products, diapers and adult incontinence products are supplied within the shower program and in the food hamper program; and,
- Staff would look into the details of a recent press release from BC Housing announcing 45-50 housing units being supported by Fraserside in Queensborough.

The Committee provided feedback in response to the following questions:

Do you have other proposed actions to address homelessness and other social issues?

What are your suggestions with regard to enhancing access to toilet facilities, particularly for the unsheltered?

- Providing free-standing, self-cleaning toilets would enhance services for the unsheltered; however, location and accessibility are key considerations for their utility;
- Providing mobile showers may also be useful rather than relying on the City's pool facilities;
- Toilets are a basic human right and the development of a toilet facility at 22nd Street Skytrain station, as well as in other locations, would be beneficial for many groups of people (street entrenched, seniors, families);
- Given that the shower program in the City has had significant uptake ,it would be important for it to be offered on an ongoing basis at the community centres and not be dependent on funding; and,
- Perhaps the provision of changing facilities and an extra set of clothing to change in to would encourage more uptake of the laundry program.

Committee members made the following general comments:

- It would be important for the City to think creatively in terms of providing services, whether these be temporary or permanent; and,
- Appreciation and acknowledgement was given for the City's "I's on the Street" (micro-cleaning) program as an important piece in building trust with the business and resident community.

5.2 Affordable Housing Be Heard New West Update

Anur Mehdic, Housing / Child Care Planning Analyst, advised the Committee that the proposal for a six-storey affordable housing project at 823-841 Sixth Street had been approved at the May 31, 2021 Public Hearing, and that all information regarding the project is available on the Be Heard New West website, including the Council package, correspondence, and video.

5.3 Child Care and Sustainable Transportation Considerations

Anur Mehdić, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst and Christine Edward, Transportation Planner, provided a PowerPoint presentation on child care and sustainable transportation considerations, including the following information:

- Background on Council’s strategic priorities for both childcare and sustainable transportation;
- Challenges in regards to developing new child care spaces and meeting off-street parking and play space requirements; and,
- Current approaches and past examples of providing for child care parking, including development variance permits, Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures and curbside management policies.

Mr. Mehdić started the discussion by asking the Committee to respond to the survey question: *“Is the committee supportive of staff exploring a policy related to child care and sustainable transportation goals, including utilizing on-street parking and employing time-limited loading zones for child care purpose?”*, to which the Committee noted an overwhelming positive response.

In response to the question *Are there other strategies that staff should consider?*, Committee members provided the following feedback:

- The challenge in encouraging the implementation of sustainable transportation options is that currently it is rare for parents to be able to send their children to child care that is nearby to their residence and therefore easily accessible by transit and/or walking;
- Until there are enough child care spaces available in the City that parents can choose where to send their children, it may be difficult to support non-driving methods;
- It would be helpful to examine how the City is doing in terms of the provision of child care for children with special needs or disabilities, and how this may also feed into the transportation discussion; and,
- It would be important to be flexible, to concentrate on safety and to ensure that parents have more choice in childcare.

5.4 Child Care Be Heard New West Update

In response to the question *Does the AHCC Advisory Committee have additional affordable child care issues to identify, which staff could present to the AHCC Task Force?*, members noted:

- A key issue being brought forward by the governing body (Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) is to focus on ensuring a living wage for childcare staff and early childhood educators (ECEs); and,
- While there is a need to open additional childcare spaces in the City, importance should also be placed on the child care operators' ability to keep staff, and the City could look at ways to encouraging a standardized living wage in childcare centres.

6.0 REPORTS AND INFORMATION

6.1 Housing Needs Report

The Chair noted that the Housing Needs Report was included in the agenda package.

7.0 CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items.

8.0 NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, September 7, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. Location to be confirmed.

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

ON MOTION, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Certified correct,

Original Signed
COUNCILLOR JAIMIE MCEVOY
CHAIR

Original Signed
NICOLE LUDWIG
ASSISTANT CITY CLERK