

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND CHILD CARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Tuesday, March 8, 2022
Electronic and in Meeting Room G
Lower Level, City Hall

PRESENT:

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy	Chair*
Jessica Gillis	Alternate Chair/Community Member*
Dalia Al Houseini	Community Member*
Tanis Anderson	Representative, School District 40*
Avnil Chand	Community Member*
Bruna Maciel	Community Member*
Louise Sallai	Representative, BC Housing*
Jayne Ogundehinde	Community Member*
Betina Wheeler	Representative, Homelessness Coalition Society*

ABSENT:

Viramit Bajwa	Community Member
Wes Everaars	Community Member
Blaine Kane	Representative, Indigenous Advocacy or Social Service Organization

STAFF PRESENT:

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

*Denotes electronic attendance

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Councillor McEvoy opened the meeting at 5:34 p.m. and recognized with respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. He 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.

Procedural note: Item 4.1 - Orientation and Oaths of Office was addressed prior to other agenda items.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

See above.

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES AND NOTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

3.1 September 7, 2021 Minutes

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the minutes of the September 7, 2021 Affordable Housing and Child Care Advisor Committee meeting be adopted.

Carried.

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

3.2 November 9, 2021 Notes

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the notes of the November 9, 2021 Affordable Housing and Child Care Advisor Committee meeting be adopted.

Carried.

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

3.3 January 11, 2022 Notes

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the notes of the January 11, 2022 Affordable Housing and Child Care Advisor Committee meeting be adopted.

Carried.

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

4. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

4.1 Orientation and Oaths of Office

Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, commenced with her Legislative Services Committee Orientation PowerPoint presentation which included the role of advisory committees, the Terms of Reference, meeting attendance and quorum, meeting conduct, City policies and freedom of information, and, lastly, Oaths of Office.

4.2 Homelessness Action Strategy Engagement

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, shared a PowerPoint presentation which provided an overview of the City's Homelessness Action Strategy (HAS), which will be implemented with the assistance of the Homelessness Coalition Society, the Community Action Network, and the University of British Columbia School of Community and Regional Planning.

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

- The City has strong relationships with the Lower Mainland Purpose Society and Lookout Housing and Health Society and their outreach workers help to ensure that the HAS recommendations reflect what they see on the streets, including that being on the street may be a choice for some people;
- Feedback is being received from vulnerable renters and the City has a renovictions bylaw to protect renters;
- Tenant support information can be shared at an upcoming meeting;
- Staff will look into the allowed rental increase that occurred in approximately four buildings in New Westminster as this could possibly make living situations even more precarious for some people and possibly push them into homelessness; and,
- Members are encourage to fill out the survey and share it with their networks as the feedback received helps to inform the recommendations.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- If what the City is doing to address the opioid crisis and homelessness is not shared with the community it perpetuates feelings of discomfort and a lack of compassion;
- Some people may not want to stay in a shelter if they have to leave their personal belongings outside or are unable enter the shelter without their partner or pet;
- It would be relevant to see if and to what extent evictions play in the population of those that are homeless;
- When supporting homeless people, consideration must be given to others in the neighbourhood as well;
- Many seniors on the cusp of homelessness have a multitude of issues that need to be addressed; and,

- An evictions program could provide one-time funding for people that does not need to be paid back, unlike the Rent Bank, as many people struggle with repayment of loans when money is tight.

Councillor McEvoy invited Committee members to contact him via email or on Facebook to share their concerns regarding homelessness in the City.

Mr. Mehdic thanked Committee members for their feedback and advised that the recommendations can be more thoroughly discussed at the next meeting.

4.3 Crisis Response Bylaw

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, shared a PowerPoint presentation update on the Crisis Response Bylaw Amendments which would allow faster action on projects to address an emergency or crisis and see two Official Community Plan amendments for non-market housing at 350 – 366 Fenton Street and supportive housing at 60 – 68 Sixth Street.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Freire noted that an ongoing challenge for the City is the lack of public land; however, Council has been very supportive in using it for housing, etc.

With respect to why the affordable housing project will only offer one and twobedroom residences, Ms. Freire will look into the background of the project and report back.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- Some municipalities, like Squamish, are including schools inside of residential buildings; and,
- As the old high school sits on a First Nations burial ground, it is now under the jurisdiction of the Cemetery Act. It is anticipated that at some point there will be a memorial area on the grounds which would likely remain as a passive landscape such as greenspace or a park.

4.4 Seniors Housing Collaborative

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, provided a PowerPoint presentation outlining the Seniors Housing Collaborative which has the goal of changing policies and practices in order to allow senior renters to age in the right places.

In response to a suggestion from the Committee, Mr. Mehdic advised that during tomorrow's meeting with the New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services, they

would include in the discussion how to address the issue of supply and provision of air conditioners and fans to seniors who may not be able to afford them and which tend to sell out very fast during heat events. Mr. Mehdic noted that the Seniors' Services Society, through the Collaborative, is exploring the possibility of a fan donation program to assist vulnerable seniors.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- This is a great initiative especially given COVID-19 and the extreme heat events which greatly impacted seniors; and,
- BC Housing has been discussing the recent heat domes and acknowledge that future events such as these need to be factored into their planning.

4.5 Artist Mentor Project

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Artist Mentor Project which will highlight the importance of home, belonging, and community.

In response to a suggestion from a Committee member, Ms. Freire advised that this initiative could be connected with Homelessness Action Week next year.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- In effort to break the stigma of homelessness being a moral failure and to engage younger generations, this could be a topic of discussion at New Westminster Secondary School with the school being approached to be a space for voices to be heard and information sharing. This could possibly be done through the Welcome Centre at the School; and,
- Information sharing could be done through the various New West social media groups and at the New West Farmers' Market where a booth could be set up to share and receive information.

4.6 Community Action Network (CAN) Recruitment

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding Community Action Network Recruitment noting that the training, which engages those with lived and living experience in homelessness and poverty, is meant to be as low-barrier as possible with funding provided for childcare and transportation, and food provided during training days.

Committee members advised that the training information could be shared via the various New Westminster community groups on Facebook such as the Downtown Helping Hands group, the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, etc.

4.7 Childcare BC Plan

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, shared a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Childcare BC Plan which will provide a number of child care benefits for children and families.

Tanis Anderson, School District 40 Representative, advised that École Qayqayt Elementary School families are eligible for the Affordable Child Care Benefit and that many other changes are anticipated to take place as the move to the Ministry of Education occurs.

Mr. Mehdic noted that before and after school child care in Queensborough will be a topic for discussion at an upcoming meeting.

4.8 Seamless Day Kindergarten Pilot

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Seamless Day Kindergarten Pilot Program which utilizes existing classrooms outside of school hours.

Tanis Anderson, School District 40 Representative, share that the Seamless Day Kindergarten Pilot Program is an exciting program that has started at École Qayqayt Elementary School for 12 children. She noted that the School District has requested further expansion of the Pilot of the Provincial Government as many parents have expressed interest in having their children participate in the Pilot.

Mr. Mehdic encouraged the Committee to share any affordable child care topics they would like to see addressed at an upcoming meeting with him.

4.9 Election of Alternate Chair

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT Jessica Gillis be elected at the Alternate Chair for the 2022 term of the Affordable Housing and Child Care Advisory Committee.

Carried.

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

Councillor McEvoy shared information about the motion that he took to the March 8, 2022 Council meeting to address the recent and ongoing invasion of the Ukraine by the Russian Federation. He noted that the City's Ukrainian community is preparing for a possible influx of refugees.

5. NEW BUSINESS

None.

6. END OF MEETING

ON MOTION, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

7. UPCOMING MEETINGS

- May 10
- July 12
- September 6

Certified correct,

Original Signed
Councillor Jaimie McEvoy

Original Signed
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk
