

MULTICULTURALISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

September 25, 2013 at 5:30 p.m.
Committee Room No. 2
City Hall

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councilor Chuck Puchmayr	- Chair, Council Member
Connie Behl	- Community Member
Chinu Das	- Community Member
Eman Ismail-Elmasri	- Community Member
Maria Marcu	- Community Member
Maryam Salmani	- Community Member
Maria Soriano	- Community Member

REGRETS:

Bayoush Mengesha	- Community Member
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GUESTS:

Maylen Crespo	- Family Services of Greater Vancouver
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STAFF:

John Stark	- Senior Social Planner
Oana Capota	- Curator, Museum and Archives
Doug Walcott	- Police Services
Donna Martin	- Recording Secretary

The Multiculturalism Advisory Committee was called to order at 5:34 p.m.

1.0 ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

1.1 Adoption of Minutes of April 24, 2013 was added to the agenda.

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the minutes of the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee meeting held on April 24, 2013 be adopted.

CARRIED.

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

2.0 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

2.1 Adoption of the Minutes of June 19, 2013

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the minutes of the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee meeting held on June 19, 2013 be adopted.

CARRIED.

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

3.0 PRESENTATIONS

3.1 Welcoming Spaces Assessments – Maylen Crespo

Maylen Crespo, Facilitator for Family Services of Greater Vancouver, reviewed the Welcoming Spaces Assessments. Ms. Crespo reported the following:

- This is a tool to determine how welcoming agencies are to immigrants;
- 10 sites are being assessed;
- All sites have responded positively;
- A report will be prepared for individual sites and also a consolidated report;
- A major challenge is that immigrants do not understand the term ESL and often their English skills are minimal;
- Having immigrants do the assessment allows them to become familiar with the agencies;
- Family Services of Greater Vancouver is looking for seniors who would like to train immigrants to tell their stories in order to try to find common ground;

The following comment was offered to Ms. Crespo:

- Having a picture of facility, a map and brochure is helpful.

3.2 MAC Immigrant and Refugee Survey – John Stark

John Stark, Senior Social Planner, reported on the population growth in the City between 2006 and 2011, noting the immigrant population comprises 61.3% of total population growth. Of the 224 respondents, 43.2% immigrated from China (including Hong Kong) and the Philippines. Only 18% of respondents on arrival reported very good competency in English and only 12% of respondents on arrival reported a very good knowledge of Canada.

54.2% of respondents indicated that the main reason for immigrating or moving to New Westminster was the availability of affordable housing and the close proximity to family, friends and ethnic community members, as well as the central location and good transit.

The survey found that immigrants and refugees face the following challenges:

- Finding suitable employment;
- Learning a new language;

- Locating adequate, affordable housing;
- Securing child care;
- Adapting to a new culture and values;
- Finding a doctor that speaks their mother tongue;
- Dealing with mental health issues; and
- Dealing with unrealistic expectations.

Mr. Stark reviewed the gaps in services and welcoming facilities (see 5.5.3 and 5.6.2 of report respectively). It was noted that 76.9% of respondents generally felt welcome in New Westminster and 82.8% would recommend the City as a place to live.

During the presentation, Committee members offered the following comments:

- Immigrants are often overlooked for employment and housing as out of country references are costly;
- Cultural ethnic names can be an issue when seeking employment;
- Isolation, loneliness and depression, especially in the senior population, often spiral downward;
- Immigrant victims of crime feel at a disadvantage, not knowing the reporting process;
- Food at food banks is sometimes not culturally appropriate;
- Transportation (i.e. Compass Card) is complicated for some immigrants.

Mr. Stark asked the Committee to reflect on the survey results and to share suggested actions at the next meeting.

4.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

4.1 There was no Unfinished Business for discussion.

5.0 NEW BUSINESS

5.1 There was no New Business for discussion.

6.0 REPORTS AND INFORMATION

6.1 Century House Inclusion Project – John Stark

John Stark reported the Century House Inclusion Project has been endorsed by City Council. Councillor Puchmayr will be involved in the implementation.

6.2 Safe Harbour City-Wide Implementation Update – John Stark

John Stark gave an update on the implementation of the City-wide Safe Harbour Program reporting the training will begin in November.

6.3 Welcoming Communities Program Update – Eman Elmasri

Eman Elmasri updated the Committee on the Welcoming Communities Program. Ms. Elmasri stated that there are three components: inclusive workplaces, receptive communities and welcoming spaces. The Welcoming and Inclusive New Westminster (WIN) Community Partnership Table is meeting on a monthly basis to implement the program and there will be a major event to showcase the deliverables in February 2014.

7.0 CORRESPONDENCE

7.1 No correspondence was submitted at this time.

8.0 NEXT MEETING

Next meeting October 23, 2013 in Committee Room No. 2

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

**COUNCILLOR CHUCK PUCHMAYR
CHAIR**

**DONNA MARTIN
RECORDING SECRETARY**