

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

**Tuesday, May 7, 2013 5:30 p.m.
Committee Room No. 2 at City Hall**

MINUTES

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy, Chair
Norah Andrew, Community Member
Catherine Cheng, Community Member (arrived 6:00 pm)
Yasser Elmasri, Community Member
Christine Vickers, Community Member
Lillian Whitmore, Community Member

ABSENT:

Nancy Brar, Community Member
Ashley Currie, School District No. 40
Chinu Das, Community Member
Judith Hockney, Fraser Health Representative
Briana Tomkinson, Community Member

STAFF:

John Stark, Senior Social Planner
Terry Dunlop, Recording Clerk

GUESTS:

Betina Ali, Community Food Action Committee - Harvest Box Project
Dianne Cook, Vancouver Coastal Health - Hoarding Action Response Team
Drew Stewart, Coordinator, Aunt Leah's Place

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 pm to receive presentations; quorum was achieved later in the meeting, following item #3.1.

1.0 ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

No items were added.

2.0 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

2.1 Adoption of the Minutes of March 5, 2011

This item was postponed, pending quorum.

3.0 PRESENTATIONS

3.1 Vancouver Hoarding Action Response Team (HART) –

Ms. Dianne Cook, Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), representing the Vancouver Hoarding Action Response Team (HART) outlined HART's collaboration with the Fraser Health Authority to assist in local management of hoarding issues. Ms. Cook advised that she had already made presentations to City bylaw enforcement staff, fire and police representatives to describe Vancouver's experience and approaches to the serious issues of hoarding.

The City of Vancouver started a pilot project to address hoarding issues. HART comprises two VCH workers, a city firefighter and a bylaw enforcement officer. The staff joined to create a hoarding task force website. The task force contacted every jurisdiction across Canada to find examples of similar programs, however, they found that none had dedicated resources to specifically address hoarding issues. Therefore, HART began its efforts based on trial and error experience.

Many reports of hoarding problems are received via the City of Vancouver's centralized directory assistance 3-1-1 telephone line. Some reports come from concerned neighbours and/or relatives (or anonymously), whereas others might arise through building inspections or fire safety checks. If neighbouring property is endangered, Vancouver's regulations provide the right of entry to premises after 24-hours notice, especially in cases of fire safety issues.

In such instances, the Fire Department will issue an order requiring compliance within two weeks (combustibles must be removed or reduced to provide adequate egress). Failure to comply within that period results in a \$150 re-check fee; however, Ms. Cook advised that she and her colleagues attempt to work with violators to achieve compliance through non-bureaucratic means.

Frequently, hoarders feel a sense of shame and isolation and the causes of the condition are usually a result of mental illness [hoarding is likely to become officially designated as a mental illness]. Members of HART fill a role as mental health workers and attempt to resolve issues by working with sufferers and their families to build trust. Client files are not closed until counselling or group therapy is established. The goal is to help clients assimilate back into the community.

In ensuing discussion, the following questions and comments were raised:

- New Westminster encounters most of its hoarding problems through the bylaw inspection process, often involving renters. Some individual offenders have significant challenges. Fraser Health and the City are trying to develop a protocol to achieve compliance and to ensure that authorities' actions are compassionate and do not contribute to homelessness.
- Through the Lower Mainland Local Government Association, Council has begun a process of outreach to other jurisdictions to develop a more coordinated approach to hoarding issues. It is hoped to eventually have a motion considered by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) that if adopted would be forwarded for potential enactment of provincial legislation.
- HART has developed a PowerPoint presentation that would be useful in presenting statistical details and legislation governing different types of accommodation.
- HART works with individuals and eases out gradually, once appropriate new support is in place for clients. There is a focus on helping clients to reintegrate back into the community.

Catherine Cheng arrived at 6:00 pm (quorum achieved).

3.2 Aunt Leah's Place Housing Proposal for 307 Boyne Street

Drew Stewart, Aunt Leah's Place, made a presentation on the organization's rezoning application for a Threshold House at 307 Boyne Street in Queensborough. He noted that the house currently provides a rental subsidy program to three adult mothers and their children. Mr. Stewart further informed that to provide the Threshold program, the property would have to be rezoned from Queensborough Neighbourhood Residential Dwelling Districts (RQ-1) to a Comprehensive Development District.

In describing the program, Mr. Stewart advised that the participating mothers would receive support and access to off-site programming to create a healthy environment for themselves and their babies. These supports would include access to Transition and Family Support Workers and weekly life-skills and training sessions.

Mr. Stewart suggested that the application was consistent with the Official Community Plan (OCP) land use designation and similar in scale to the allowed residential uses anticipated in the OCP. He also maintained that it was supportive of the City's Affordable Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Action Strategy and Implementation Plan.

Mr. Stewart reported that the Queensborough Residents' Association and the Advisory Planning Commission unanimously support the application.

In ensuing discussion, committee members considered the following:

- The Threshold's Program helps to avoid infants becoming wards of the court.
- The New Westminster Affordable Housing Continuum seeks to transition people from temporary housing into a more permanent situation.
- Early intervention is a tool for breaking the cycle of children becoming wards of the court and eventual homeless youth.
- Neighbourhood values will be respected and there will be no increase in density.
- Support from the community has been achieved through open houses.
- Queensborough Residents' Association and the Advisory Planning Commission have voiced support of the application.
- Applicants are selected through referrals from hospitals, social workers and other organizations that assist mothers in maintaining or regaining custody of their children
- No safety or security complaints have arisen from the neighbourhood, police or other agencies.
- The premises will be governed by strict and specific Comprehensive Development requirements to ensure the house does not transition to other uses.
- If the Threshold Program should cease, the property will revert to its original zoning.

MOVED and SECONDED

***THAT** the Community and Social Issues Committee supports the application from Aunt Leah's Place to rezone the property at 307 Boyne Street from Queensborough Neighbourhood Residential Dwelling District (RQ-1) to Comprehensive Development District to permit establishment of a Threshold House which will provide housing for first time, low-income adult mothers and their babies.*

CARRIED.

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

3.3 Community Food Action Committee Harvest Box Project

Ms. Betina Ali advised that the Harvest Box project has been in existence since 2006 and supports programs such as the Farmers' Market, community gardens, etc. The City had a similar program in 2006 - 2007 located at St. Barnabas Church, however, due to a loss of funding, food quality could no longer be guaranteed.

The Help on Wheels (HOW) organization has taken on the Harvest Box Project with the aim of introducing it to a number of municipalities. HOW representatives were in attendance at the meeting and addressed various aspects of their organization, which was established in 1998. In partnership with Simon Fraser University, the BC Institute of Technology, Kwantlen Polytechnic University and other jurisdictions, HOW is a community-based model that interacts with activities in participating jurisdictions.

For \$10 per box [\$8 for single parents and seniors], the organization delivers boxes of fresh produce (approximately 10 pounds) to recipients about twice per month. This enables people to make healthier choices than simply dry goods usually provided by food banks and other charities that cannot access fresh produce. By receiving the produce at community centres, seniors and others have the chance to mingle and interact and perhaps discover other activities and programs provided by the centres.

The service has worked well in other cities that have adopted the program and it works well with local farmers and community gardens. HOW is working with multiple community organizations that wish to see New Westminister re-establish distribution of fresh produce under a sustainable program. There is also an initiative known as the *BuyOne GiveOne* box (BOGO), which allows individuals to donate a box.

In ensuing discussion, committee members considered the following:

- Community centre staff assist the elderly and disabled with carrying boxes
- The service should be advertised in the *Active Living Guide*, with distribution points being set up at various community and recreation centres
- HOW is a registered charity with 180 volunteers who focus on building relationships and providing a “hand-up” rather than a “hand-out”
- HOW wishes to make the program as simple as possible and accessible to those who are food-insecure, year-round
- Individuals with particular needs are identified through City organizations with which HOW is already partnered; however, there is a desire to build on other available resources

In summing up, the Chair proposed that he and staff meet with the HOW representatives to develop a more specific proposal for Council consideration.

4.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

4.1 Century House Inclusion Enhancement Project

John Stark, Senior Social Planner, addressed the results of the survey and outreach methodology that was designed to create a more inclusive environment for Century House. Statistical details are based on 162 responses. An action plan has been developed to provide greater representation more reflective of the changing demographics in New Westminster.

The 2012 membership was 2,059 (75% female). There is a growing recognition of the need to attract certain minority groups, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons), First Nations, the disabled, immigrants, the isolated and older adults 50-64.

Among the conclusions were: that change should be implemented incrementally and strategically and the need for a sustainable approach is important. Members were asked to email John Stark with ideas and suggestions to enhance inclusion at Century House.

5.0 NEW BUSINESS

No new items presented.

6.0 REPORTS AND INFORMATION

6.1 Hoarding Backgrounder

The committee received the Hoarding Backgrounder document for information.

6.2 Century House Survey Summary

The committee received the survey summary document for information.

***2.0 ADOPTION OF MINUTES (Postponed until Quorum)**

2.1 Adoption of the Minutes of March 5, 2011

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the minutes of the Community and Social Issues Committee meeting held on March 5, 2013 be received and adopted

CARRIED.

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

7.0 CORRESPONDENCE

No items submitted.

8.0 NEXT MEETING

June 11, 2013 – 5:30pm, Committee Room 2, City Hall

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm.

Councillor J. McEvoy
Chair

Terry Dunlop
Recording Clerk