



COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

October 8, 2013: 5:30 p.m.
Committee Room No. 2
City Hall

MINUTES

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy	- Chair
Norah Andrew	- Community Member
Ashley Currie	- School District No. 40 Representative
Chinu Das	- Community Member
Briana Tomkinson	- Community Member
Yasser Elmasri	- Community Member
Christine Vickers	- Community Member

REGRETS:

Lillian Whitmore	- Community Member
Nancy Brar	- Community Member
Catherine Cheng	- Community Member
Judith Hockney	- Fraser Health Representative

GUESTS:

Faith Bodnar	- Inclusion BC
Ross Chilton	- Community Living Society
Dave Brown	- Lookout Emergency Aid Society

STAFF:

John Stark	- Senior Social Planner
Alison Worsfold	- Recording Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m.

1.0 ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

There were no additions to the agenda.

2.0 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

2.1 Adoption of the Minutes of June 11, 2013

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the minutes of the Community and Social Issues Committee meeting held on June 11, 2013 be received and adopted.

CARRIED.

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

3.0 PRESENTATIONS

3.1 Perspectives on Social Inclusion

John Stark, Senior Social Planner, spoke to the report "Connections and Engagement: A Survey of Metro Vancouver," and highlighted the following:

- The Vancouver Foundation prepared the report in 2011, which is based on consultation with 275 organizations and 100 community leaders;
- The foundation hired a research group in 2012 to conduct a survey of over 3,000 people in regards to social inclusion. The findings were as follows:
 - Poverty, homelessness, and disconnection/isolation are all contributors to social inclusion;
 - Personal friendships are a key aspect to social inclusion;
 - 31% of respondents stated that it is difficult to make new friends;
 - 50% of respondents who lived in Canada for less than five years found it difficult to make new friends; and,
 - 25% of respondents found themselves alone more than they would like.
- According to Statistics Canada, immigrants made up 61.3% population growth in New Westminister between 2001 and 2006;
- The survey reveals that only 26% of respondents had their neighbours over in the past 12 months for a get-together;
- The survey revealed that 46% of respondents rarely see their neighbours and 32% had little interest in getting to know each other; and,
- It was discovered that bonds to the larger community also play a major role in the social inclusion issue, as 49% of the respondents had never volunteered.

Mr. Stark reviewed a report submitted to BC Recreation and Parks Association from the City of New Westminster in October 2009. The report, which is entitled 'Everybody Active,' was funded by the BC Recreation and Parks Association and aims to identify and address barriers and challenges to participation in parks and recreation programs by low-income adults. Mr. Stark noted that the findings were based around consultation with 74 individuals who identified 19 major barriers, such as anxiety and low self-esteem, high admission costs and program fees, and high cost of transportation.

City initiatives related to social inclusion include:

- Century House Inclusion Project
- Dementia-Friendly Communities
- Parks, Culture and Recreation Subsidy Program
- Safe Harbour: Respect for All
- Seniors Engagement Toolkit

Community initiatives related to social inclusion include:

- Homelessness Action Week and Connect Days
- In My Back Yard Fair;
- Neighbourhood Small Grant Program
- New West Pride
- Welcoming Communities Program

3.2 Social Inclusion for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

Ross Chilton, Community Living Society, provided the following information regarding the society:

- Community Living Society is a Vancouver-based organization providing services and support to developmentally disabled persons;
- The organization supports approximately 300 people with disabilities across Metro Vancouver;
- 75% of the members are currently unemployed; and,
- There are members who feel socially excluded from their community.

Mr. Chilton noted that according to the "quality of life matrix," the perception of accessibility to transportation makes it more likely for people to participate in community functions. Further, that employment makes people feel included with their communities, as it provides friendships, gratitude, and monetary support. Mr. Chilton suggested that the City should show more leadership around economic/employment inclusion and try to make a commitment to employ people with developmental disabilities.

Faith Bodnar, Inclusion BC, provided the following information regarding her organization:

- It supports and provides services to special needs children and youth and their families around the Province;
- It is the largest social serving organizations for people with developmental disabilities;
- It is a provincial non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the participation of people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of community life;
- It has maintained itself as a liaison and advocacy voice for people with developmentally disabled;
- It ensures that there are a prescribed number of people with developmental disabilities who attend the meetings with the Minister. It guarantees that their voice is heard, and that they are represented equally in the government; and,
- It prides around their slogan: 'ready, willing and able.'

3.3 Social Inclusion for Persons who are Homeless or Disenfranchised

Dave Brown, Lookout Emergency Aid Society, provided the following information regarding social inclusion for persons who are homeless and disenfranchised:

- There are many reasons for homelessness, with a major cause being the high cost of living;
- Lookout Emergency Aid Society currently houses people who are an active part of the workforce;
- Lookout Emergency Aid Society has successfully supported the homeless to sell their art on the local streets in order to make money;
- Homeless people do not necessarily choose to be homeless;
- Homeless people face humiliation on a daily basis, and in return lack self confidence;
- A lot of homeless people refuse to enter into local shelters, as they continue to disassociate with society; and,
- Homeless people have very little access to utilize transit, due to lack of funds.

Mr. Brown suggested that mentally disabled people need to be accepted for who they are, and that they do not need to be fixed, but rather heard. Mr. Brown noted that it has also proven to be effective when the homeless are reunited with their families. He talked about the importance of social inclusion in assisting people who are homeless and disenfranchised to feel part of the community and to be able to make a meaningful contribution.

3.4 Social Inclusion for Persons who are Newcomers – TBD

John Stark, Senior Social Planner, reported that the City's Multiculturalism Advisory Committee implemented a survey of new immigrants and refugees in 2013, with the findings as follows:

- 224 people responded;
- 76.9% of new immigrants and refugees generally felt welcome, however, many commented that they felt that they did not belong or fit in and that it was difficult to make Canadian friends;
- A number of respondents cited that they were isolated or lonely;
- Respondents made the following suggestions to facilitate social inclusion among new immigrants and refugees:
 - Create a welcome and integration centre;
 - Hold orientation sessions;
 - Offer open houses for civic facilities and programs;
 - Provide more affordable programming;
 - Provide spaces for immigrants to meet and socialize;
 - Raise awareness about the benefits of immigration;
 - Review requirements related to volunteering; and,
 - Reinstate funding for the immigrant mentorship program.

4.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There were no items.

5.0 NEW BUSINESS

5.1 Social Inclusion Discussion – Challenges, Opportunities and Suggestions

Discussion ensued, and the following comments were noted in regards to the challenges, opportunities and suggestions for social inclusion:

- Due to the high cost of living, young families are increasingly living with their parents;
- Society cannot economically afford for people to live on the streets and be unemployed;
- Education on homelessness would benefit society immensely;
- Perpetual volunteerism is problematic and receiving a pay cheque aids in eliminating social exclusion;
- Parenting in Canada and financial literacy programs are providing opportunities to build education and volunteer experience;

- 80% of people with developmental disabilities are employed in Washington State, whereas only 20% are employed in BC; and,
- Enrolling homeless children in school is another major barrier we face.

6.0 REPORTS AND INFORMATION

6.1. Connections and Engagement: A Survey of Metro Vancouver (June 2012)

Procedural Note: This item was discussed with Item 3.1. The public may access the report at:

<http://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/sites/default/files/documents/VanFdn-SurveyResults-Report.pdf>

6.2 Everybody Active Consultation and Findings (October 2009)

Procedural Note: This item was discussed with Item 3.1.

6.3 Century House Inclusion Project and Action Plan (September 2013)

John Stark, Senior Social Planner, reviewed the 'Century House Inclusion Project Report and Action Plan,' which was completed in September 2013 by City staff. Mr. Stark noted that the purpose of the report is to provide opportunities for older adults (50 to 64) and seniors (65+) to access and benefit from the programs, services and supports which are offered by or available through Century House.

7.0 CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items.

8.0 NEXT MEETING

November 5, 2013 at 5:30 p.m. in Committee Room No. 2

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting concluded at 7:25 p.m.

Councillor J. McEvoy
Chair

Alison Worsfold
Recording Clerk