

## **COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE**

**September 1, 2015: 5:30 p.m.  
Meeting Room #1 (East Room)  
City Hall (511 Royal Avenue)**

### **MINUTES**

#### **VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT**

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy	- Co-Chair
Catherine Banardo	- Fraser Health (interim replacement for Catherine Butler)
Brynn Bourke	- Community Member
Tammy Dewar	- Community Member
John Hooker	- Community Member
Nadine Nakagawa	- Community Member
Peter Nautenbach	- Community Member
Deanna Tan	- Fraser Health (Alternate for Judith Hockney)
Briana Tomkinson	- Community Member
Ken Wilkinson	- Community Member

#### **REGRETS:**

Norah Andrew	- Community Member
Jason Campbell	- Community Member

#### **STAFF:**

John Stark	- Senior Social Planner
Tristan Johnston	- Planning Analyst
Lauren Blake	- Committee Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 5:06 p.m.

#### **1.0 ADDITIONS TO AGENDA**

There were no additions.

## **2.0 ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

### **2.1 Adoption of the Minutes of June 2, 2015**

#### **MOVED and SECONDED**

*THAT the minutes of the June 2, 2015 Community and Social Issues Committee meeting be adopted.*

**CARRIED.**

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

## **3.0 PRESENTATIONS**

### **3.1 Tenant Relocation Policy**

John Stark, Senior Social Planner, summarized the On-Table document regarding the City's Tenant Relocation Policy.

Discussion ensued, and the Committee noted that ageing rental units can be unfit for seniors and individuals with accessibility challenges, due to a lack of elevators and features such as high pile carpeting. The Committee further noted that relocating renters from their neighbourhood could disrupt social connections. In addition, the Committee provided the following suggestions:

- That the changing rental stock be measured for each neighbourhood to determine if some areas of the city are affected more than others;
- That rental stock and vacancy rates be tracked by bedroom size and price range;
- That the City investigate creative uses for City-owned buildings, such as implementing rental units above Canada Games Pool if it is redeveloped; and,
- That the Greater Toronto Housing Authority could be utilized as a model for New Westminster.

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy, Chair, requested that the Committee identify gaps in the City's Rental Policy, and bring forward ideas at the November 3, 2015 Community and Social Issues Committee meeting.

## **4.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **4.1 Official Community Plan Update**

John Stark, Senior Social Planner, advised that there would be continued public engagement for the Official Community Plan (OCP), noting that the document will address community and individual well-being. Areas of community and individual well-being would include:

- Age and ability friendly community;

- Family-friendly community;
- Welcoming and inclusive community;
- Healthy, safe and supported community;
- Poverty reduction and food security; and,
- Social connectedness and participation.

Mr. Stark advised that the document would be distributed to the Committee for comment at the November 3, 2015 meeting.

## **4.2 Payday Loan Profile and Regulations**

John Stark, Senior Social Planner, summarized the on-table document regarding payday loan profiles and regulations.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Stark advised that payday lenders are required to post comparable rates.

Discussion ensued, and the Committee provided the following suggestions:

- The City could regulate payday lenders to some extent, such as by requiring these businesses to apply for a rezoning application;
- The Committee could provide assistance to VanCity regarding their small loan program, such as identifying barriers or issues for those applying for the loans;
- The Federal government could be lobbied through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) to enforce regulations prohibiting interest rates above 60%;
- The issues surrounding payday lenders could be connected to other City policy issues, such as the Community Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Tenant Relocation Policy;
- The City could contribute to a financial education program that addresses issues such as student and credit card debt;
- The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) could be contacted for information and feedback, as it was noted that the organization implemented a campaign regarding payday lenders; and,
- The Economic Development Office could contact a credit union, such as VanCity and/or Westminster Savings, with respect to opening a branch in the downtown area.

## **5.0 NEW BUSINESS**

### **5.1 Green Spaces in Low-Income Neighbourhoods**

Briana Tomkinson, Community Member, summarized the article *How Trees Calm Us Down* by Alex Hutchinson.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Tomkinson and John Stark, Senior Social Planner, advised that there are municipalities that are establishing edible tree areas that allow pedestrians to harvest fruit from street trees.

Discussion ensued, and the Committee noted the following comments:

- The City could prioritize lower income neighbourhoods for the establishment of boulevard trees;
- Lower income areas could benefit from additional boulevard trees, as residents in these areas may not be able to plant their own trees;
- Lower income areas may have higher numbers of pedestrians;
- Streets trees are a component of the Official Community Plan and the addition of fruit trees could be connected to the City's Comprehensive Food Strategy;
- The presence of trees could impact how residents choose a pedestrian route, as well as contribute to traffic calming measures; and,
- The City Horticultural Manager could be consulted prior to planting street trees to advise of planting issues and/or unintended consequences, such as additional wildlife or pest concerns.

**MOVED and SECONDED**

*WHEREAS The City of New Westminster is currently developing an Urban Forest Management Program;*

*WHEREAS The City of New Westminster is developing strategies to increase and improve its forest canopy;*

*WHEREAS studies have found that neighbourhoods with greater tree canopies have improved health and happiness indicators;*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of New Westminster develop and implement a tree planting and management program that is inclusive of all neighbourhoods and focuses on neighbourhoods with the least amount of greenery and/or lower incomes.*

**CARRIED.**

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

## **5.2 Extreme Weather Plans**

John Stark, Senior Social Planner, reported that the City currently has an extreme weather plan, and is developing an additional plan for extreme heat.

Discussion ensued, and the Committee noted the following comments:

- It was suggested that the City conduct secondary outreach to reach individuals that may not have caregivers or family checking on them;

- Information regarding the extreme heat plan could be provided at malls where individuals may go to cool down;
- It was suggested that air conditioners could be subsidized for individuals living on the top floor of a walk-up building, or a cool down in the lobby area of a walk-up building;
- The City could develop a Climate Change Adaption Plan;
- The City could maintain a list of vulnerable people who may require assistance;
- Shade spots could be implemented in playgrounds;
- Additional street trees could be located near walk-up buildings to provide additional shade; and,
- The City could budget for effects of climate change.

**MOVED and SECONDED**

*BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of New Westminster develop a climate change response plan focusing on community and social issue such as food security, protecting vulnerable populations impacted by extreme weather events, and climate refugee integration into the community.*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Community and Social Issues Committee and Environment Advisory Committee work collaboratively with City staff regarding the development of a climate change response plan.*

**CARRIED.**

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

**6.0 REPORTS AND INFORMATION**

**6.1 How Trees Calm Us Down? – Alex Hutchinson**

This item was discussed under item 5.1.

**7.0 CORRESPONDENCE**

There were no items.

**8.0 NEXT MEETING**

**November 3, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. in Committee Room #2**

**9.0 ADJOURNMENT**

**ON MOTION**, the meeting concluded at 7:15 p.m.

Certified correct,

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**Councillor J. McEvoy**  
**Chair**

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**Lauren Blake**  
**Committee Clerk**