

MULTICULTURALISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC)

**Wednesday, February 19, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.
Committee Room 2, City Hall**

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillor Chinu Das	- Chair, City Council Member
Dalia Al Houseini	- Community Member
Halim Habibi	- Community Member
Rozina Jaffer	- Community Member
Karima Jivraj	- New Westminster Downtown BIA
Lizz Kelly	- Community Member
Karen Klein	- SD40 Representative
Elaine Su	- Community Member
Kelsi Wall	- Community Member

MEMBERS REGRETS:

Mike Coca	- Community Member
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STAFF PRESENT:

Oana Capota	- Curator, New Westminster Museum
Claudia Freire	- Housing and Social Planner
Diana McDaniel	- Acting Inspector, NWPD
Carilyn Cook	- Committee Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 p.m.

Procedural note: Item 3.1: Orientation and Oaths of Office was addressed prior to the start of regular agenda Items.

1.0 ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

MOVED AND SECONDED

THAT the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee agenda of the February 19, 2020 meeting be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED.

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

2.0 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

2.1 Adoption of the Minutes of November 20, 2019

MOVED AND SECONDED

THAT the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee minutes of the November 20, 2019 meeting be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED.

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

3.0 PRESENTATIONS

3.1 Orientation and Oaths of Office

Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, provided a 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.

4.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

4.1 City of New Westminster Sanctuary City Policy: Access to City Facilities, Programs and Services for All Residents, Regardless of Immigration Status

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, provided an update regarding the City's Sanctuary City Policy, reminding Committee members that on January 28, 2019 a motion was passed by Council requesting that staff provide a report on the feasibility of making New Westminster a Sanctuary City. At the February 25, 2019 Council meeting, a follow up motion was passed by Council directing staff to develop a draft Sanctuary City Policy and Implementation Plan with input from the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee and the Welcoming and Inclusive Communities (WINS) Local Immigration Partnership.

Ms. Freire stated that staff are currently working on the community and stakeholder consultation aspect of the process which will include a community open house on March 10, 2020 and a stakeholder workshop on March 13, 2020, and that the next step will include the draft Policy and Implementation Plan going to Council for consideration in April/May of 2020.

Councillor Das clarified that the intent of New Westminster becoming a sanctuary city would be to provide services for refugees and stated that the City would not do anything in contravention of the Federal and/or Provincial Governments.

Councillor Das informed the Committee that, as this will be a split policy, a complementary document will be prepared by the New Westminster Police Department.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Freire provided the following comments:

- Further public engagement will include a webpage and survey and staff will seek consultation to increase engagement if needed;
- Once the draft policy is complete, it will go to Council for feedback and endorsement; and,
- Along with non-profit organizations, the stakeholder meeting could include those that are in direct contact with newcomers as well as businesses that may provide employment to new residents.

Discussion ensued, and the Committee provided the following comments:

- The name should be neutral and less provocative but have weight and bring a feeling of safety;
- Other municipalities have struggled with this as well and Vancouver has called their policy the “Access to City Services Without Fear (ASCWF) for Residents with Uncertain or No Immigration Status”; and,
- The word “sanctuary” could remain but with a clear outline.

Councillor Das encouraged Committee members to attend the Council meeting that the draft policy goes to for endorsement to possibly speak to Council as a delegation and confirmed that she would speak to the draft policy prior to it being voted upon.

4.2 Multicultural Festival Working Group

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, announced that Council passed the September 18, 2019 motion from the Committee recommending the establishment of the Multicultural Festival Working Group and advised that a volunteer from the Committee is being sought to sit on the Working Group.

MOVED AND SECONDED

THAT the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee elect Halim Habib to represent the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee on the Multicultural Festival Working Group.

CARRIED.

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

4.3 Welcome Centre at New Westminster Secondary School

Councillor Das advised that, based on a 2006 access survey, immigrants need a central place to services their needs. As this issue continues to come up, discussions were held with the School District last year wherein it was determined that a welcome centre would be created at the high school. She shared that while this will be a wonderful addition to the community, there is still a lot to be worked out.

In response to questions from the Committee, Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, provided the following comments:

- Marketing and communications will help spread the word that, although the welcome centre will be in a school, it will not just be for parents. The Welcoming and Inclusive Communities (WINS) Local Immigration Partnership will also share this information; and,
- The City has initiatives in place to support those who may fall through the cracks and connect them with the services they need.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- The newcomer and welcome centres, which will be located together, will be a place for people to find information on everything from newborns to seniors and everything in between;
- Various ways for new immigrants to find out about available services include visiting the library, family doctors and other medical professionals, and the Pathways platform which is a good way to locate services for New Westminster and the Tri-Cities; and,
- The welcome centre should include a living room area to encourage networking and making friends.

4.4 Newcomers Festival and Information Fair

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, announced that the Newcomers Festival and Information Fair will take place on Saturday, April 4, 2020 from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Century House. Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, will send the poster to Committee members next week, once it is complete.

4.5 Komagata Maru Motion – Councillor Das

Councillor Das shared that last year she met with a gentleman to discuss the possible role that New Westminster played in the Komagata Maru incident stating that when the ship was not allowed to dock, New Westminster residents sent food and other supplies to those on board. She noted that in 2019 Council passed a motion that she put forward requesting that staff look into whether or not this assistance occurred,

in what capacity, and who was involved. To date, not enough information has been found to confirm this happened but it was determined that funds may have been raised at the saw mill, which is not actually in New Westminster.

Oana Capota, Curator, New Westminster Museum, stated that guest curators from the Indo-Canadian community have not been able to recall this happening, however, there could be something that staff have not yet uncovered.

Councillor Das advised that the research on this topic is not complete and suggested that Committee members forward any leads they may have on this topic to staff for further investigation.

A Committee member suggested that, perhaps, the Suwannee lumber family may have been involved in assisting those aboard the ship and will contact Ms. Capota after the meeting for follow up information.

5.0 NEW BUSINESS

5.1 Election of Alternate Chair

MOVED AND SECONDED

THAT Rozina Jaffer be elected as the Alternate Chair for the 2020 term of the Multicultural Advisory Committee.

CARRIED.

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

5.2 UNCHR Cities #WithRefugees

Councillor Das informed members that the Mayor received a request for the City to join the UN Refugee Agency's (UNHCR) #WithRefugees campaign, which would be a statement of solidarity that the City supports refugees. Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, read aloud the request which Mayor Cote forwarded to the Committee for discussion and feedback.

In response to a question from the Committee, Ms. Freire advised that at this point the City is only being requested to sign the declaration in support of the initiative and suggested that this may be an appropriate time to take an inventory of what the City is doing and what it can do, possibly in conjunction with other municipalities, with respect to supporting refugees.

Discussion ensued, and the Committee provided the following comments:

- It is very important for people living in peaceful countries to speak up for those that are suffering and, while this is only on paper, it is a good initiative;

- It is not appropriate to jump onto a hashtag without actions to back it up as it may raise expectations that cannot be met; therefore, it would be useful to know what other cities are doing in conjunction with the hashtag; and,
- By taking part in the initiative, the City would be saying that it is working on being a welcoming and inclusive City for refugees; however, what the City is currently doing to welcome refugees should not be discredited.

Councillor Das advised that once the Committee is able to see initiatives being undertaken by other municipalities alongside the hashtag, the Committee may be more comfortable endorsing the initiative.

6.0 REPORTS AND INFORMATION

6.1 The Family You Choose Exhibit Update

Oana Capota, Curator, New Westminster Museum, advised Committee members of an upcoming exhibit called, “The Family You Choose” which will explore how people make connections and community. The exhibit will be opening on June 25, 2020 and staff are currently reaching out to various community groups and starting an advisory group in order to receive input into the exhibit which will include interactive and participatory elements.

Ms. Oana posed the following questions to Committee members:

- What would members like to see in the Exhibit?
- What would the needs of our various multicultural groups be?
- What are the calls to action that you would like museum visitors to do after seeing the exhibit?
- Are there any groups you would like to see as part of the exhibit?
- What interactive or participatory elements would they like to see in the exhibit?

Discussion ensued, and the Committee provided the following comments:

- There are many informal ways that families gather together;
- A relevant exhibit theme that could be explored is family versus isolation; and,
- Our interdependence on one another has been researched a lot and is something that could be studied.

Due to lack of time, it was agreed that Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, would email the questions to Committee members who could respond to Ms. Oana directly.

7.0 CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items.

8.0 NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 in Committee Room 2 at 5:30 p.m.

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

ON MOTION, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Certified correct,

Original Signed _____
Councillor Chinu Das
Chair

Original Signed _____
Carilyn Cook
Committee Clerk