

## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND CHILD CARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**Tuesday, September 6, 2022  
Meeting Room G  
Lower Level, City Hall**

**PRESENT:**

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy*	Chair
Jessica Gillis	Alternate Chair/Community Member
Dalia Al Houseini*	Community Member
Tanis Anderson*	Representative, School District 40
Bruna Maciel*	Community Member
Louise Sallai*	Representative, BC Housing
Betina Wheeler*	Representative, Homelessness Coalition Society

**ABSENT:**

Viramit Bajwa	Community Member
Avnil Chand	Community Member
Wes Everaars	Community Member
Blaine Kane	Representative, Indigenous Advocacy or Social Service Organization
Jayne Ogundehinde	Community Member

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Anur Mehdic*	Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst
Carilyn Cook	Committee Clerk

\*Denotes electronic attendance

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### **1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Councillor McEvoy opened the meeting at 5:32 p.m. and recognized with respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. He acknowledged that colonialism has made

invisible their histories and connections to the land. He recognized that, as a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

## **2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

None.

## **3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

### **3.1 March 8, 2022**

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** the minutes of the March 8, 2022 Affordable Housing and Child Care Advisor Committee meeting be adopted.

**Carried.**

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

## **4. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

### **4.1 Community Action Network (CAN) and the Homelessness Action Strategy (HAS): A Discussion on Collaborative Public Engagement**

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, shared a PowerPoint presentation which outlined the following:

- The definition of public engagement;
- Contributors during the public engagement process;
- Principles for collaborative public engagement;
- The public engagement spectrum;
- Equity and ethics in public engagement; and,
- Engaging those with lived and living experience as it relates to the Community Action Network (CAN).

In response to the question “Do residents feel heard by their local government? How?” members provided the following comments:

- As the City no longer does direct mailouts to residences, and with the decrease in local newspaper publications, those that do not use the internet to receive information and share feedback may feel disconnected, uninvolved, and unheard by the local government;
- Digital inclusion is a huge part of keeping people informed and involved with local government and those without access to or knowledge of how to use technology will be overlooked;

- Immigrants who are not Canadian citizens may believe that they cannot participate in civic feedback;
- The BeHeard website is a welcome addition to City engagement and it is great that staff are being proactive and connecting with people where they gather;
- The City must be mindful of challenges faced by those with English as a second language;
- Many issues encountered by immigrants cannot be dealt with immediately, and those who have experienced trauma may distrust the government and find it uncomfortable to be proactive and attend City events;
- Grassroots engagement such as pamphlets on electrical poles, information tables at the Farmers' Market, etc., are effective ways to inform and engage; and,
- More effort should be put into encouraging city youth to engage.

Mr. Mehdic continued with his presentation and outlined the following with respect to the Homelessness Action Strategy (HAS) and public engagement:

- Engagement principles and techniques;
- HAS proposed actions and main themes; and,
- Implementation of the HAS.

In response to the questions "What do you see as the main barriers to meaningful equitable public engagement with residents with lived and living experience in poverty and homelessness?" "How should we address these barriers moving forward?" and "How could you be better heard by your local government?" members provided the following comments:

- The lack of language resources is a huge barrier to engaging with the immigrant community;
- Providing information in a variety of languages can be improved upon by the City, including links on the city website to have website wording translated to different languages;
- Translation may be expensive but it is key to engaging the immigrant community and letting them know that the City wants to hear from them;
- School District 40 and nonprofit organizations may be able to assist in public engagement by connecting with families and people who are not engaged;

- Events to give people with lived and living experience in poverty and homelessness could be held to give them time and space to meet, get comfortable, and discuss things;
- Settlement workers would be a great way to reach immigrants and help address larger issues such as housing; and,
- Measurements of successful public engagement would include attending an event and seeing renters participating alongside homeowners and people participating in Public Hearings regardless of their language skills.

Dalia Al Houseini, Community Member, offered to assist staff in contacting settlement workers to assist with engagement of the immigrant community.

Mr. Mehdic noted that the City's large south Sudanese community includes CAN graduates who were able to engage with the larger Sudanese community. This was an example of how CAN graduates can help build bridges to their communities. Another win for the CAN Program was having graduates inform a large part of the City's Community and Energy Emission Plan.

Mr. Mehdic continued with his presentation and outlined the following with respect to Digital Inclusion and the goal to move at-risk and vulnerable populations from digital exclusion to digital inclusion for ease of access to a variety of services. This includes device availability, internet access, and engagement education, as well as the importance of using plain language in communications.

#### **4.2 Extreme Heat Preparedness for At-Risk and Vulnerable Community Members**

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, shared a presentation on extreme heat preparedness for the at-risk and vulnerable community which outlined:

- The issue and need for extreme heat preparedness; and,
- The interdepartmental working group that was created to develop a plan to address the needs of at-risk and vulnerable populations during extreme heat events.

In response to the question "Is the Committee aware of other ways we can continue to identify isolate or vulnerable seniors?" members provided the following suggestions:

- Informational pamphlets could be sent out through the food and resource hubs for inclusion in food hampers, as well as through the Don't Go Hungry food support program, the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, etc, to reach seniors who may not be accessing other services;
- Information and surveys could be included through the business licensing process in order to get a better grasp of this population;
- Recruit building ambassadors to engage and check in on residents and hold community events;
- Enact a bylaw that would require landlords to provide cooling stations in common areas of their buildings; and,
- Mail pamphlets to residents in rental buildings to share resources available in the city.

In response to suggestions from the Committee, Mr. Mehdic provided the following comments:

- The City's Emergency Management team engaged with the landlords of over 200 buildings whose responsibility it is to reach out to tenants and facilitate emergency management measures;
- The Provincial Government is exploring making air conditioning in new builds mandatory; and.
- Privacy laws, with respect to receiving information regarding vulnerable seniors and those who may be receiving assistance from BC Housing, is being looked at.

In response to the question "Is the Committee aware of other ways we can support communication and outreach?" members provided the following suggestions:

- Provide hardcopies of information of all the ways people can communicate and get involved with the City, in a variety of languages, and encourage people to share them with those that are not on social media;
- Direct mail is the best way to reach everyone in the City and to share information in advance of things such as extreme heat events, etc.;
- When information changes, such as the hours of operation of cooling centres, the changes need to be clear so as to not cause confusion;
- Pets must also be considered as people will not leave them if they cannot take them to safer venues;
- Information about the cooling stations that were newly installed around the City must be shared as people were unsure of their purpose; and,

- Information could be shared on the various New Westminster Facebook pages.

Mr. Mehdić advised that more information about cooling stations and other emergency management initiatives could be included in the City's Newcomers' Guide.

Mr. Mehdić continued with his presentation and shared information about other initiatives including the Fraser Health air conditioner loan pilot program, the EMO supplying drinking water to non-profit and faith-based organizations for at-risk and vulnerable populations, and cooling misters installed by the City, as well as an update on the Ross Tower Pilot Project and affordable housing.

Discussion ensued, and Committee members provided the following comments:

- We need creative initiatives to assist people in finding housing, including those that may be unemployed for a variety of reasons; and,
- Adding co-ops or co-housing options would bring more affordable housing options and a better sense of community to the City; however, barriers that may excluded people from living in co-ops need to be addressed.

In response to suggestions from the Committee, Mr. Mehdić provided the following comments:

- Additional details will be provided at a future meeting with respect to the transition of the shelter located at 502 Columbia Street which is undergoing a number of upgrades such as installation of a sprinkler system, etc., and which will be open past March 2023;
- Installation of the stand-alone toilet facilities is a long, complex process due to utilities, procurement, supply shortages, etc.; however, a lot of work is going on behind the scenes. An update will be provided to the Committee either via email or at the next meeting; and,
- CAN graduates are very involved in the provision of the stand-alone toilets as access to toilet facilities is a human rights issue.

#### **4.3 ChildCare BC New Spaces Fund: Project Updates**

Anur Mehdić, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, shared a PowerPoint presentation which outlined project updates on Provincial Childcare BC New Spaces Fund locations including those located at the təməsewtxw Aquatic and

Community Centre, 490 Furness Street, Queensborough Community Centre, and Skwo:wech Elementary School (for which the City also provided some funding).

In response to a question from the Committee, Mr. Mehdic advised that currently most child care meetings are regarding 490 Furness Street and Queensborough Community Centre in consideration of the timelines and challenges being encountered due to shipping delays with respect to getting materials and furnishings for the spaces. He noted that there would be a minimum 3 week request for proposals which will go out to the wider community when appropriate.

Tanis Anderson, Representative, School District 40, announced that, with respect to the Skwo:wech Elementary School childcare spaces, they are waiting for items such as cribs to arrive and that a few things such as licensing still need to be worked out; however, it is anticipated that the spaces will be open by the end of 2022, and that it will be run by the Lower Mainland Purpose Society.

Mr. Mehdic advised that an update on the Provincial Government's \$10 per day childcare initiative will be provided at a future meeting.

**5. NEW BUSINESS**

None.

**6. END OF MEETING**

The meeting ended at 7:30 p.m.

**7. UPCOMING MEETINGS**

This is the last meeting of the 2022 committee term.

Certified correct,

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Councillor Jaimie McEvoy

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Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk