

SENIORS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC)

November 18, 2021

**Meeting held electronically under Ministerial Order No. M192/2020
And in Meeting Room G, City Hall**

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillor Chinu Das
Julia Schoennagel
Frances Blake
Calvin Donnelly
Rosemary Dunne
Tim Hicks
Donna MacLean
Brenda Southam

- Chair*
- Alternate Chair/Community Member*
- Century House Association Representative*
- Sapperton Old Age Pensioners' Association Representative
- Community Member*
- Community Member*
- Queensborough 50+ Social Club Representative*
- BC Seniors Services Society Representative*

MEMBER REGRETS:

Harbir Batra
Lynn Radbourne

- Community Member
- Community Member

STAFF PRESENT:

John Stark
Jacque Killawee
Jacklyn Altamura
Carilyn Cook

- Supervisor, Community Planning
- City Clerk
- Recreation Supervisor, Seniors Services*
- Committee Clerk

*Denotes electronic attendance

The meeting was called to order at 2:02 p.m.

Councillor Das welcomed everyone to the meeting and recognized that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsundered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples and acknowledged that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. She shared that, as a city, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

1.0 ADDITIONS / DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the November 18, 2021 Seniors Advisory Committee meeting agenda be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED.

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

2.0 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

2.1 Adoption of September 9, 2021 Minutes

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Minutes of the September 9, 2021 Seniors Advisory Committee meeting be adopted with the clarification that, under Item 5.4 – Transportation in Queensborough, it is the accessible parking spot located near the community garden that is being misused.

CARRIED.

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

3.0 PRESENTATIONS

3.1 Uptown Sixth Street Public Realm Improvement

Mitchell Reardon of Happy City Urban Planning and Design Consultants provided a presentation on the Uptown Sixth Street Public Realm Improvement Project which outlined the following:

- Project overview;
- Study area;
- Timeline;
- Project background and goals;
- Key design features;
- Intended outcomes; and,
- Next steps.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Reardon provided the following comments:

- A tour of the area with 'I's on the Street,' a micro street cleaning initiative that employs people with lived experience at a living wage, will be done to receive a balance of perceptions and to ensure a comfortable environment for everyone;
- Work is being done with Universal Access Design to address aspects of the scramble crosswalk which may be challenging for those with dementia or other cognitive disorders;
- Of the 13 parking spots that will be available, it has not yet been determined how many of them will be designated as accessible spots;
- It is challenging to determine how space is allocated for the many different needs; and,
- A report on the project is anticipated to be ready in early 2022, and once the design is refined, it will be shared with stakeholders once again.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- The provision of seating and shelter from weather will be a great addition to the area;
- Washroom access is an important consideration for seniors and persons with disabilities. The Westminster Centre Mall washrooms are not entirely accessible with some having been closed for a year or so;
- The crosswalk scramble is an efficient and safe idea and may solve a number of problems; however, the visual overlays on the street may go against dementia studies with respect to texture and colours;
- The crosswalk scramble and curb cuts must be very visible so people know that they are approaching them;
- To remain accessible to those who use mobility devices, the wider sidewalks should not be taken over by patios, and the trees that are planted should have roots that grow down as opposed to up and out;
- Consideration needs to be made regarding the rerouting of traffic and who will be affected by it once the street is reconfigured;
- Neighbours in the area must be made aware that delivery vehicles will not be able to access businesses during certain times, and short-term loading zones for things such as Amazon, Door Dash or Skip the Dishes food delivery services, etc., must be maintained;
- Currently, parking is not provided for those delivering to apartments so the drivers park in the bike lanes;
- Westminster Centre Mall owners may be open to sharing their parkade with visitors to the area who may not necessarily be patronizing the Mall;
- Accessible parking is an issue everywhere and designated parking seems to always be the first to go when there are changes to the roadways. This greatly affects those, such as seniors and persons with disabilities, who have no other options;
- The formula used to calculate accessible parking spots is inadequate and may not provide enough spaces in an area that has the highest number of senior residents in the city. Spots designated for different uses at different times during the day have also proved to be inadequate;
- The unique paving at Eighth Street, across from Century House, is noisy when driven on, possibly affecting residents in the area and should be a consideration if this is planned for Sixth Street;
- Parking meters for the accessible spaces should accept both coin and credit which they currently do not;
- There are a number of concerns that need to be addressed by the City's Transportation Team with respect to the design concept;
- As this neighbourhood is home to the largest percentage of seniors in New Westminster, the design of this space will greatly impact them;
- The safety and security features are good; and,
- While it is great that wider sidewalks will encourage and welcome visitors to the area, it would not be safe to have the traffic move to nearby streets, such as Princess Street, where many seniors reside. This will take a lot of traffic management consideration.

4.0 NEW BUSINESS

4.1 Addressing the Needs of Seniors Experiencing Homelessness

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding seniors experiencing homelessness which outlined the following:

- A backgrounder on homelessness in New Westminster;
- Homelessness population numbers, including the increase in homeless seniors;
- Factors that contribute to homelessness;
- The impact that homelessness has on organizations, businesses, and neighbourhoods; and,
- Current and future actions that the City is taking to address homelessness.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Stark provided the following comments:

- The definition of a “sheltered homeless person” is someone in an emergency shelter or who is temporarily staying with family or friends;
- It would be a great idea to advocate for the different types of housing that could be provided such as cohousing, which involves shared space and provides support, to BC Housing;
- We need to determine how to ensure that facilities, programs, and services are responsive to a homeless senior’s needs such as diabetes, blood pressure, and those who may have early onset dementia;
- The City has received \$875,000 that is funding five food security and resource hubs which many seniors are utilizing and which may be saving them from becoming homeless. The funding application process is very competitive; however, the City has done quite well in securing funds;
- More seniors non-market or affordable housing is needed and the City applies for all types of applicable, available housing, with the knowledge that the cost of a project includes the supports that need to be in place, not just the cost of the housing;
- If a tenant is struggling to pay the rent, the landlord may use the situation to get a new tenant so they can raise the rent; and,
- Continuous efforts must be made to share resource information with seniors so they know where and how to seek help when they find themselves in dire situations.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- Some residences have students living with seniors and they help each other with tasks such as cooking and cleaning. Mixing ages is positive and beneficial for all;
- The City must be proactive and designate some of the supportive housing going up in the municipality for seniors;
- Preventative measures, such as subsidies for utilities, food, etc., should be in place for seniors whose income is not meeting inflation to allow them to remain in their homes;
- The Sapperton Pensioner's Hall is looking to get subsidized housing in the Sapperton area that would benefit seniors;
- Supportive measures should be in place to protect senior renters and find ways to determine when seniors are on the verge of homelessness; and,
- Landlords, the Seniors' Services Society, Century House, and other seniors focused organizations around the city may be able to provide insight as to when a senior may be nearing homelessness, especially those who do not speak up when they are in need of assistance.

5.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

5.1 Social Inclusion, Engagement and Reconciliation Advisory Committee (SIERAC) Terms of Reference

Jacque Killawee, City Clerk, advised Committee members that the feedback they provided at the September 9, 2021 meeting regarding the Social Inclusion, Engagement and Reconciliation Advisory Committee assisted in the creation of the Committee's Terms of Reference. She shared that John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, Jennifer Miller, Manager of Public Engagement and Rob McCullough, Manager of Museums and Heritage Services, will be the staff liaisons for the Committee and will review the applications from which recommendations will be sent to Council for final approval, along with all the applications received.

Ms. Killawee noted that staff will strive to have seniors on all city committees when the committee selections get underway to ensure seniors' voices are heard in vital areas. She advised that the Terms of Reference would be going to Council on December 13, 2021 for final approval.

Councillor Das acknowledged the importance of having seniors on City committees and encouraged everyone to apply to sit on a committee that interests them.

5.2 Hey Neighbour Collective Update

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reported that the more isolated seniors become, the more vulnerable they are in emergency situations and that, in order to address this issue, on February 25, 2020, Council approved becoming a partnering organization in the Hey Neighbour Collective (Collective) which would facilitate social connectedness, community engagement, and resilience, in suitable rental residential buildings.

Mr. Stark advised that the Ross Tower was identified as an appropriate pilot project site in the fall of 2020 where emergency (resilience) preparedness, social programming, etc., initiatives would be undertaken, and that Council approved the reallocation of \$15,000 from the 2021 COVID-19 At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force budget to help support this pilot project.

Councillor Das noted the importance of this initiative and expressed her hope that it would expand over time as seniors' events that have taken place over the last number of years have shown that senior isolation is an ongoing and increasing issue.

6.0 REPORTS AND INFORMATION

6.2 Century House Association Report

Frances Blake, Century House Association Representative, advised that activity groups are gradually starting up again and that it is anticipated that their new Bingo machine will be up and running in January. She noted that seniors have remained active in technology through the pandemic with many participating in the Embracing Technology classes that Tim Hicks, Community Member, has been facilitating.

Ms. Blake reported that Century House now requires proof of vaccination from visitors and that once that is provided, members receive a sticker for their membership card for convenience the next time they visit.

Ms. Blake encouraged Committee members to apply to sit on the Century House Association Executive, which will begin in January.

6.3 Sapperton Old Age Pensioners Association Report

Calvin Donnelly, Sapperton Old Age Pensioners Association Representative, shared that they had a good turn out at their meeting yesterday and that they are looking to the future and upcoming projects.

Mr. Donnelly advised of the ongoing issue that the Sapperton Pensioners' Hall has had with respect to the TransLink Parking Tax for their rental parking. He noted that the tax came as a surprise to the Hall and queried, if perhaps, other organizations may be unaware of it as well.

6.4 Queensborough 50+ Social Club

Donna MacLean, Queensborough 50+ Social Club Representative, advised that the Queensborough 50+ Social Club was still not meeting in person but that attendance at games is starting to pick up and they are receiving a great response to the Christmas dinner that is being organized.

Councillor Das voiced her appreciation of the reports and advocacy provided by members at the meetings. She thanked everyone for their service to the Committee and the community and advised that projects being worked on by the Committee would transfer over to the Social Inclusion, Engagement, and Reconciliation Advisory Committee. She reminded members that updates and ways to provide feedback on various City projects could be found at beheardnewwest.ca.

7.0 NEXT MEETING

This is the last meeting of the Seniors Advisory Committee.

8.0 ADJOURNMENT

ON MOTION, the meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

Certified correct,

Councillor Das
Chair

Carilyn Cook
Committee Clerk