

Social Planning Advisory Committee – Minutes

Present:

Chairperson – J. Villeneuve
S. Dooley
D. Chattha
G. Gill
K. Kreis
Dr. Z. Malik

Absent:

Councillor Rasode
K. Ardawa
M. Chatwin
L. Coyle
R. Mehta
G. Dean (alternate)

Staff Present:

A. Murphy, Senior Social Planner
M. McCargar, Planning Technician
H. Dmytriw, Legislative Services

Also Present:**Guests:**

Doug Patterson
Nancy Anderson
Dana Hanson

Round the table introductions were made.

A. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

It was

Moved by S. Dooley
Seconded by D. Chattha
That the Social Planning Advisory Committee

Minutes of March 24, 2011, be adopted.

Carried

Agenda varied to allow delegations to be heard first.

C. DELEGATIONS**2. Government Aided Refugees (GARs) Transportation Costs**
File No. 5080-01, 0220-05

Councillor Villeneuve provided the delegation with a background on the City of Surrey's advocacy efforts calling on the federal government to discontinue the refugee loan program. The City has put resolutions forward to the Union of BC Municipalities and Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Correspondence received from Jason Kenny, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, shows he has not been amenable to change. Councillor Villeneuve had the opportunity to meet with Michaëlle Jean and her assistant, Peter Flegel at the Welcoming and Inclusive Communities forum; they were quite horrified to hear that refugees have to pay back the transportation loans. We hope to engage them in working with us.

Peter Yuot provided a presentation on his difficult experiences as a government assisted war refugee. His friends Doug Patterson, Nancy Anderson and Dana Hanson were at the meeting in support.

- Yuot and his two school-aged brothers arrived from the Sudan 2.5 years ago. He spent four years in a refugee camp in Kenya living in tents and described the difficulties of being a war refugee and of his journey to Canada.
- Once in Canada, refugees must begin repaying their transportation loans after one year. They must repay the transportation loan before they can obtain their Canadian citizenship, Canadian passport, or student loans. Peter Yuot now works with South Fraser Community Services in Surrey.
- Peter acknowledged the support of his friends. His best friend, Doug Patterson helped him repay his loans.
- His good friend, Nancy Anderson, has used her own time to tutor his brothers to learn English and created a computer program for him. His brothers couldn't speak English but are now in high school and looking to go to university in the future. Dana Hansen is a Vancouver Sun reporter and has written stories about government assisted refugees and the hardships caused by the transportation loan program.
- New refugees have high expectations, but it is stressful. Peter knows Sudanese families living in Surrey and many have lived here for 11 years. Earning \$10 per hour they have not repaid their loans. Peter is encouraging them to repay since if you still owe the transportation loan you cannot get student loans.
- The federal government assists refugees for the first year. After one year they end up on welfare if they do not have a job.
- If the transportation loans are not repaid then you deny someone else arriving in Canada. The poorest of the poor are paying off the loans to allow another refugee Canadian entry.
- Peter commented that "war refugees" really need Canada's help; Canada should focus on war refugees.

Councillor Villeneuve thanked Peter Yuot for his very good presentation. The annual cost for the federal government to cover the transportation expenses of refugees would be \$13-\$15 million; the cost of forgiving all the owed transportation loans is \$38 million. Most Canadians are unaware that refugees have to repay their transportation costs. The wonderful magazine articles, such as the article in the Cultures West magazine, show how important it is that this message be heard and that this is a very immoral issue for Canada to be putting this kind of pressure on people.

In response to queries the following information was provided:

- You have to apply to Canada from a different country than your country of origin. Peter left Sudan as his village was attacked. He didn't have time to go to the government for documents. He fled and ran as fast as he could; he had nothing. Later he returned to look for his brothers. At Immigration in Kenya some were turned back. Those with a good chance were women, and children aged 10-12. In the refugee camp in Kenya, lawyers conduct interviews to determine that people are genuine refugees, and can be mandated by the UN to be resettled. The Canadians are strict--government assisted refugees coming to Canada are genuine. Peter assumed a loan for himself and his two brothers since they are his dependants and are minors.

Steven Dooley will connect Peter with colleagues at Kwantlen who might be interested in having him make a presentation.

Councillor Villeneuve noted that settlement agencies across the country are on board with regards to elimination of the transportation loan for refugees. There is a strong lobby for change as Canada is the only country in the world that charges interest on the loans.

1. Positive Haven Program

File No. 5080-01

Carol Anderson a South Fraser Community Services volunteer appeared as a delegation and provided a presentation regarding how people are living with HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C, the barriers they face and some of the services offered by the Positive Haven program.

The following comments were provided:

- South Fraser Community Services' Positive Haven Program received a 1 year grant from MAC Cosmetics to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS - to demystify the issue, bust stereo types and make referrals.
- 13,000 people are living with HIV in BC today. 25% don't know they have it. 6,000 people are on HIV medications.
- There are 28 approved medications. As compared to the HIV drug cocktails of years ago, many now just take 1-2 pills. We are lucky to be living in this area with Centre for Excellence for HIV at St. Paul's Hospital. Those now diagnosed can expect to live a normal lifespan.
- 55% of people with HIV/AIDS worldwide are women.
- 65,000 people in BC have Hep C. 20% of Hep C clears naturally from the body. Hep C is easier to contract than HIV. A package of information was provided on table.
- Some people are devastated by the diagnosis; they feel they have let people down or people are blaming them. Many are dealing with post traumatic stress due to the diagnosis, or loss due to estrangement of families or employment. Hep C meds can cause hair loss, itching, and weight loss. Many people with HIV are more at risk due to weakened immune systems.
- Disclosure: The law says the only ones who need to be disclosed to are those you are having sex with.
- At Positive Haven people can get high protein food, attend drop-in programs to find out about meds and programs, and connect with others. There are social programs; community donations support art therapy, bowling, and other programs.
- The programming has been running at South Fraser for over 10 years. Most people don't know much about it.

Councillor Villeneuve thanked the delegation for her presentation.

3. African Canadian Positive Network

File No. 5080-01; 0220-05

Patience Nyoni spoke about why and what the organization does or hopes to do in the future.

Positive Outcomes: How a Course in Leadership can Change Lives, by Janet Madsen, article from *A Quarterly Publication of Positive Women's Network*, Volume 18, Number 3, July 2010.

The following comments were provided:

- Patience Nyoni is originally from Zimbabwe. She was a refugee for 5 years in S. Africa. She came to Canada three years ago with her husband and 3 of her 5 children. She had to leave two children in S. Africa; she is still struggling to get her two kids here as refugees.
- Life was tough in S. Africa. They had a hard time finding food and shelter. She was an elementary teacher in Zimbabwe, but since she had no identification papers she could not get a job.
- They received no orientation prior to coming to Canada and had no idea what to expect here. They were diagnosed as HIV positive but Canada accepted their applications.
- Patience lived in isolation at first but in 2009 she realized there was a need to go out and help others, especially those from Africa. She started volunteering at the Positive Women's Network as a peer support volunteer.
- In 2009 she formed a group she named African Canadian Positive Network of BC. They are providing positive mentoring and support. There is a real need to help those in the community as social stigma prevents many from sharing their views.
- Of the 25 members, only one has a job, the rest are on welfare. Most are single parents, and most suffered abuse from men in Africa.
- Patience is attending a leadership training workshop on June 24, 2011 run by Pacific Aids Network. She will be trained to be a workshop facilitator.
- The African Canadian Positive Network is not yet registered as a charity. The organization has no funds to do programs. Patience is interested in building the profile of the organization and spreading awareness within the City.
- She is working in partnership with *STOP HIV/AIDS* project in Vancouver.

Councillor Villeneuve acknowledged Patience's courage and strength for all she has been through in her life and thanked her for her presentation. It is very good work that Patience Nyoni, the African Canadian Positive Network and the Positive Haven are doing. Education is the most powerful tool to eliminate fear within the community. Most people will be receptive, positive and appreciative of the information.

The Social Planning Advisory Committee would like to stay in contact with Patience and see how we can be supportive.

S. Dooley was very touched by Patience's presentation and will contact her about doing presentations in schools.

D. Chattha will contact Patience to see if there is an opportunity for PICS to work with her.

Agenda order was resumed.

B. DELEGATION REQUEST

1. Sireen El-Nashar request to appear as a delegation to provide a presentation on a project and toolkit: Honouring Diverse Beliefs in our Communities: A Conversational Toolkit, through the Surrey Neighbouring Faiths Program that supports the growth of welcoming and inclusive communities by providing a resource for individuals, organizations and institutions to explore the significance of diverse belief systems in our society.

The content of the toolkit outlines a multi-format workshop designed to engage participants in active learning and dialogue. It supports workshop facilitators with a video documentary, a practical framework for dialogue, and list of additional resources to promote further learning.

File No. 5080-01

It was

Moved by S. Dooley

Seconded by D. Chattha

That the Social Planning Advisory Committee receive Sireen El-Nashar as a delegation to provide a presentation on *Honouring Diverse Beliefs in our Community* at a future meeting.

Carried

2. Fiona Whittington-Walsh, Department of Sociology, Kwantlen University requesting that **Paul Caune, Director of Civil Rights Now!** be requested to appear as a delegation to the Social Planning Advisory Committee to present on *Equal Access for Those with Disabilities to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

It was

Moved by S. Dooley

Seconded by D. Chattha

That the Social Planning Advisory Committee receive Paul Caune, Director of Civil Rights Now! as a delegation to provide a presentation on *Equal Access for Those with Disabilities to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* at a future meeting.

Carried

D. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS

1. **"Heart in the City" Awards Update**

File No. 0350-01

- a) Corporate Report Ro80, City Awards Program Report.
- b) Draft of the Heart in the City Award Selection criteria.
- c) Timeline

Marlis McCargar, Social Planning Technician provided the following comments:

- An email pamphlet is being created (draft copy provided, pg. 77 in agenda package). Marketing to do the branding. The categories and criteria is the most important page for the Committee to review. The goal is to make the nomination process simple and easy.

- Information on all the awards will be posted on the Surrey website.
www.Surrey.ca/newcity
- A big one-page newspaper ad will promote the awards program.
- Nominator can be anyone, but nominee should live or work in Surrey.

It was

Moved by S. Dooley

Seconded by D. Chattha

That the Social Planning Advisory Committee
receive the City Awards Program Report.

Carried

2. SPAC 2011 "Fun Work Schedule"

File No. 5080-01

The following comments were provided:

- The 2011 Work Schedule is quite full.
- The July 19, 2011 meeting to be cancelled due to scheduling conflicts.
- October 28, 2011 meeting is cancelled due to October 4, 2011 meeting.
- October 25, 2011 - Civic Awards reception night.

E. NEW BUSINESS

1. Poverty Fact Sheets

File No. 5080-01

The following comments were provided:

- SPARC BC is preparing a set of fact sheets on poverty in Surrey. Vibrant Surrey and the Poverty Task Force group will be presenting them to Council in mid-July. The fact sheets will provide a good foundation of information for the city and community organizations to use in their efforts to reduce poverty. The poverty facts sheets will be on the agenda of a future Social Planning Advisory Committee meeting.

F. ITEMS REFERRED BY COUNCIL

G. CORRESPONDENCE

H. INFORMATION ITEMS

I. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Volunteer Banquet

Davinder Chattha thanked the City of Surrey for the wonderful volunteer banquet. The shortened program was good and the choir performance was lovely.

Councillor Villeneuve will pass on the message that the committee volunteers would like to have the staff that are connected to all the committees also be in attendance next year. Councillor Villeneuve noted that an annual appreciation event is held for staff.

2. Councillor Villeneuve provided a publication regarding a Conference on planning and accessibility to Gurtej Gill.

J. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting dates of the Social Planning Advisory Committee are scheduled as follows:

June 23, 2011
July 19, 2011 - CANCELLED
September 14, 2011 - CANCELLED
October 4, 2011
October 27, 2011 - CANCELLED
November 24, 2011

K. ADJOURNMENT

It was

meeting do now adjourn.

Moved by G. Gill
Seconded by S. Dooley
That the Social Planning Advisory Committee

Carried

The Social Planning Advisory Committee adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Jane Sullivan, City Clerk

Chairperson, Councillor J. Villeneuve
Social Planning Advisory Committee