

Social Planning Advisory Committee – Minutes

Present:

Chairperson – J. Villeneuve
K. Ardawa
S. Dooley
M. Chatwin
L. Coyle
G. Gill
K. Kreis
Dr. Z. Malik

Absent:

Councillor Rasode
D. Chattha
R. Mehta
G. Dean (alternate)

Staff Present:

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

Councillor Villeneuve was delayed.
Stephen Dooley stepped in as the interim Chair.

A. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

It was

Moved by K. Ardawa
Seconded by Z. Malik
That the Social Planning Advisory
Committee Minutes of June 23, 2011 be adopted.
Carried

B. DELEGATIONS**1. Vibrant Surrey – A Collaborative Research Project on Poverty in Surrey**
File No. 5080-01; 0550-20-10

Alice Sundberg, Vibrant Surrey, presented an update on the Poverty Research Project.

The following comments were provided:

- Vibrant Surrey has been working on this project since fall 2010. The purpose is to compile existing data on poverty to provide baseline information that all agencies in Surrey can use to identify needs/gaps and measure performance. A small working group was established that includes representatives from Vibrant Surrey, Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society, Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force, Fraser Health Authority (Aboriginal Health), SPARC BC and the City of Surrey Social Planning Advisory Committee (Councillor Villeneuve and Aileen Murphy).
- The project will build on Surrey's strengths and accomplishments which include:
 - Data shows that while the overall poverty rate is increasing, Surrey's poverty rate is below the provincial average and regional averages.

- The latest 2011 homeless count reported reduced numbers of homeless people in Surrey since counting began in 2002, and is marginally lower than the last count in 2008. Fewer people are living on the streets (unsheltered homeless).
- Partnerships are making a difference. The City has provided three properties for supportive housing for the homelessness.
- There are four critical elements in helping to break the cycle of poverty:
 - i. Transportation –
 - Getting to/from work, kids to school - only 32% who live in Surrey work in Surrey; 76% in work force drive to work. It costs \$5,700 annually to operate a car. Only 11% use transit. It costs \$151 per month for transit pass for the 3 zones to Vancouver. Transportation is essential for employment opportunities.
 - ii. Housing –
 - Surrey's rents are more affordable than elsewhere in Metro Vancouver. Average rent in Surrey is \$811 per month--22% below regional average.
 - One in 10 households spends 50% or more of income on housing.
 - Waiting lists for social housing are getting longer.
 - Affordable housing makes a difference.
 - iii. Income –
 - 15.6% of Surrey families are in the low income range.
 - Groups under stress include new immigrants, seniors, Aboriginal people, single parent families, working poor and low income families.
 - iv. Supports –
 - Affordable child care
 - Access to education and opportunities
 - Strong social safety net -
 - Newton Advocacy Group Society has provided 'rent bank' assistance to over 80 families
 - Tax system initiatives aimed at families, such as child tax benefit, are making a difference
 - Tax benefits have reduced the incidence of poverty for Surrey families from 16,000 families (before tax) to 12,000 families (after tax). The poverty rate for seniors went from 16.4% (before-tax) to 8.7% (after tax).
- This program was launched under the title "**this**". *Transportation, housing, income, supports* is how we end poverty in Surrey.
- The aim is to use the data to engage groups and individuals in the issue. A meeting with sector leaders is scheduled for November. This will be followed by a community forum sponsored by Vibrant Surrey; the purpose of the forum will be to review the data and discuss solutions.
- Recommendations will go to City Council in early 2012 and the hope is that Council will play a role.
- **this** brochure provided on table.

In response to committee questions the following information was provided:

- It was noted that many of the factors related to poverty are not the responsibility of the municipality. The role of local government can be advocacy and partnership.
- Want to get a better idea of the programs that make a difference so that we can invest in those things that are working.

Councillor Villeneuve joined the meeting at 7:25 pm. Stephen Dooley welcomed Councillor Villeneuve and passed the Chair to her.

- Transportation is a major barrier. Can we address this by having more job opportunities in Surrey? or do we try to address by seeking transit subsidies for lower income people?

Councillor Villeneuve commended Alice Sundberg for her work with the Homelessness and Housing Task Force and Vibrant Surrey, and the many years that she has worked on these issues.

C. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS

1. Heart in the City Awards

File No. 0350-01

The Awards Subcommittee provided an update on the award nominations process and recommendations of the finalists for the award.

The following comments were provided:

- 38 nominations were received. The Awards Subcommittee reviewed all the nominations and selected three finalists in each category - a winner and two runners-up. The finalists have all been contacted and informed that they have been selected as a finalist. Subcommittee members contacted the references of all the finalists.

Councillor Villeneuve commended the subcommittee on their choices and noted that it is great to have received so many excellent nominations considering it is the first time for these awards.

- Linda Coyle commended Marlis and Aileen for their work in preparing the materials for the subcommittee. The subcommittee suggested that there be ribbons and/or certificates for all the finalists. The winners will be presented with a glass on wood base award. The *Heart in the City award* will be orange in colour.
- Invitations to the awards event will be sent by mail; SPAC members can bring a guest. Event to be held at the new Library.

Considerations for the 2012 Heart in the City Awards:

- Should people be permitted to nominate their own organizations/themselves?
- Is a business eligible if it is NOT located in Surrey, but does a lot of work in Surrey?
- Should there be separate categories for organizations and individuals next year? Or a better way to distinguish between nominations for organizations and individuals?
- Suggestion to change the award category from "Reducing Poverty" to "Addressing Poverty".
- A clearer delineation between the *reducing poverty* and *strengthening community* categories.

Councillor Villeneuve thanked everyone for their hard and diligent work. This is the first year for this award and this is a special award. The Civic Awards Ceremony will be held October 25, 2011 at 6:00 pm for the reception and 7:00 pm for the awards.

It was Moved by G. Gill
 Seconded by S. Dooley
 That the Social Planning Advisory
 Committee accepts the recommendations for winners and runners-up in the two categories in the Heart in the City Award as provided in the memo from the Social Planning Awards Subcommittee, dated September 22, 2011.
Carried

2. Standards of Maintenance (SOM) Bylaw

Social Planning staff provided an update on research conducted on other municipalities' experiences with Standards of Maintenance Bylaws.
 (Note: A meeting with the Executive Director of the Residential Tenancy Branch has been scheduled for October 6, 2011.)

The following comments were provided:

- Marlis McCargar has done research in follow up to the memo from the City Solicitor on Standards of Maintenance (SOM) that was brought forward for information at the June 23, 2011 SPAC meeting.
 The research has focused on two questions:
 1. How does the Residential Tenancy Branch enforce maintenance and repair provisions? and
 2. What are the experiences of Standards of Maintenance in other municipalities?
- In early September 2011, Councillor Villeneuve, Stephen Dooley and Aileen Murphy met with Councillor Villeneuve and representatives of ACORN. ACORN is advocating for low income renters in Surrey. ACORN requested to come to this committee in January 2012.
- A meeting with the Executive Director of the Residential Tenancy Branch has been arranged for October 6, 2011. Today's presentation provides an update of information that has been gathered so far. Residential Tenancy Act (RTA) is provincial legislation. The Act lays out rights and obligations of tenants and landlords.
http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_02078_01
- Residential Tenancy Act, Section 32 is the section that outlines repairs with a section on obligations to repair and maintain:

"Landlord and tenant obligations to repair and maintain
32. 1. A landlord must provide and maintain residential property in a state of decoration and repair that (a) complies with the health, safety and housing standards required by law, and (b) having regard to the age, character and location of the rental unit, makes it suitable for occupation by a tenant..."
- The Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB) administers the RTA. They provide information and a dispute resolution process.

- Dispute resolution process for a tenant requesting repairs -
 - Application fee - \$50.
 - Tenant must provide evidence (photos, proof of requesting repairs).
 - A teleconference hearing. 95% are via phone. 5% are in person and only under special circumstance.
 - RTB mails a written decision to the benefiting party in 30 days – benefiting party (e.g. tenant), must serve the other (e.g. landlord) with the order.
 - No enforcement by RTB and no follow up to ensure repairs are done.
- Standards of Maintenance By-law -
 - Municipal bylaw to enforce basic/minimum levels of maintenance of rental accommodation.
 - 1994 – BC Government amended the Municipal Act to allow local governments to adopt SOMs.
 - BC Government developed a model SOM for local governments to use as a “starting point”.
- City of Surrey 1999 report recommended not adopting an SOM.
- SOM - represents a downloading of provincial responsibility with no additional resources being provided to local governments.
- BC Municipalities' with Standards Of Maintenance -
 - About 40% of Metro Vancouver municipalities have a SOM
 - Similarities/differences -
 - Most are based on provincial model bylaw
 - Richmond – specific only to provision of water, heat and light
 - New West – rental properties must have a business license
 - Some exclude illegal suites
- Process – complaint is received (or a problem property is targeted), inspection is conducted (bylaws and others), letter is issued to landlord and time line for repairs, follow up inspection is conducted, penalties vary (ticket, court order, or city makes repairs and adds cost to property tax).
- By-law complaints – considerable variation between municipalities with SOMs in terms of the number of complaints received each year.

Committee comments were as follows:

- It would be good to know the budget associated with administering the SOM in various municipalities.
- The issue of liability was raised. If the City does the inspection initially and have been made aware of a problem could we, as a city, not then be sued because we are aware of the problem and need to take responsibility for it?
- Tenants have to go through the RTB process in order to legally withdraw rent. The SOM can assist them as an order to repair issued by the City can be used as evidence in the RTB process.
- From Newton Advocacy Group's perspective, the RTB process is very difficult for low income tenants. In some cases, when a tenant complains to the RTB, the landlord evicts them. Residents need to have a good grasp of Canadian law in order to work through the process.
- Councillor Villeneuve stated that this is an important issue that needs to be looked at to see where the City could have a role.

3. SPAC 2011 "Fun Work Schedule"

File No. 5080-01

It was

Moved by K. Ardawa

Seconded by L. Coyle

That the Social Planning Advisory

Committee approve the proposed agenda items as follows:

(a) Items for November 2011 Agenda:

- Paul Caune, Director of Civil Rights Now! to present on equal access for people with disabilities.
- Sireen El-Nashar, Neighbouring Faiths Program, to present on the "Honouring Diverse Beliefs in Our Communities: A Conversational Toolkit".

(b) Items for January 2012 Agenda:

- John Anderson, ACORN – *confirmed*
Carried

4. Transitions into Post-Secondary Education

File No. 5080-01

Geoff Dean was not in attendance at the meeting but provided an email update for the meeting regarding the issue of access to post-secondary. Since his presentation to SPAC on June 23, Geoff has made presentations to City Councils in Surrey, Richmond, White Rock and Langley Township. He will be presenting to Langley City Council in three weeks.

Councillor Villeneuve noted that Surrey Council appreciated Geoff Dean's presentation and the facts provided on Surrey being underfunded in post-secondary education. Geoff dean will be asked to provide a further update at the November meeting.

D. NEW BUSINESS**E. ITEMS REFERRED BY COUNCIL****F. CORRESPONDENCE**

1. Letter from Lucia MacLean, Area Director, Service Canada regarding two Service Canada locations in Surrey.
File No. 0430-20
2. Email request from Sarah Chung, Community Relations Coordinator/Access Transit, TransLink, dated August 12, 2011 requesting participants in TransLink's strategy for inclusivity and accessibility for all in Metro Vancouver region.
File No. 0500-01

It was Moved by Gurtej
 Seconded by Kuldip
 That the Social Planning Advisory
 Committee receive the correspondence items as information.
Carried

G. INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Corporate Report R130 - 2010 Annual Report – Plan for the Social Well-Being of Surrey Residents.
2. Corporate Report R129 – Housing Action Plan – Development of a Master Plan for Housing the Homeless in Surrey.
3. Letter from George Abbott, Minister of Education, regarding CommunityLINK funding for vulnerable students. Councillor Villeneuve suggested that we write back to Minister Abbott and invite a Ministry representative to provide a presentation to Surrey City Council or this Committee.

It was Moved by M. Chatwin
 Seconded by L. Coyle
 That the Social Planning Advisory
 Committee approve that a letter be written to George Abbott, Minister of
 Education, expressing appreciation for his response to the Committee's letter on
 CommunityLINK funding for vulnerable students and requesting a representative
 from his department to come before Surrey City Council or this Committee.
Carried

4. ISS of BC Government-Assisted Refugee Bulletin – July 2011
5. Youth Speak Up! 2011 – Pamphlet on Surrey Leadership Youth Council's annual youth forum.
6. Newspaper articles concerning Surrey classroom shortages:
 Peace Arch News, Friday, June 3, 2011
 The NOW newspaper, Tuesday, June 21, 2011
7. June 23, 2011 Regular Council Public Hearing motion regarding Transitions into Post Secondary Education
 File No. 5080-01
8. Newspaper article concerning Heart in the City Awards:
 Peace Arch News, Thursday, July 14, 2011.
 File No. 0350-01

It was Moved by Merlin
 Seconded by Linda
 That The Social Planning Advisory
 Committee receive the information items as information.
Carried

H. OTHER BUSINESS**1. Committee Member Updates -**

Karen Kreis -

- Did research on *Open Doors* and will connect with Kelsey Swanson, Manager, Community Development Services Section.
- Continues to be involved in the NAGS *rent bank* project. The Rent Bank is doing well and looking for more funding to keep it going. NAGS has recently merged with Sources.
- Sent information regarding Women against MS (WAMS) Gala Breakfast fundraiser to be held on October 13, 2011, 7:00 am at Terminal City Club in Vancouver. Cassie Campbell is to be the keynote speaker.
<http://mssoc.convio.net/site/Calendar?id=100081&view=Detail>

Stephen Dooley -

- Stephen is working with Eileen Mohan on planning an event in the spring dealing with the issue of youth violence.

I. NEXT MEETING

CANCELLED - October 27, 2011 meeting, due to Civic Awards reception being held October 25, 2011.

Next meeting of the Social Planning Advisory Committee is scheduled for November 24, 2011.

J. ADJOURNMENT

It was

Moved by L. Coyle
Seconded by K. Kreis
That the Social Planning Advisory

Committee meeting do now adjourn.

Carried

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

Jane Sullivan, City Clerk

Chairperson, Councillor J. Villeneuve
Social Planning Advisory Committee