

Focus Newton Task Force Committee Minutes

1E - Community Room B
City Hall
13450 - 104 Avenue
Surrey, B.C.
MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2023
Time: 12:19 p.m

Present:

Councillor Bains, Chairperson
Councillor Elford
Councillor Nagra

Absent:

Councillor Kooner

Staff Present:

L. Cavan, General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Culture
D. Jones, General Manager, Investment & Intergovernmental Relations
T. Waterhouse, General Manager, Community Services
S. Neuman, General Manager, Engineering
R. Costanzo, General Manager, Corporate Services
L. Thomas, Fire Chief, Fire Services
B. Edwards, Assistant Commissioner, Surrey RCMP
S. Gill, Chief Superintendent, Surrey RCMP
J. Arason, Director of Strategic Initiatives & Corporate Reporting
Y. Asadian, Community Enhancement Manager
S. Liao, Administrative Coordinator
J. Ficocelli, City Clerk
A. Sodha, Administrative Assistant

A. ADOPTIONS**1. Adoption of the Agenda**

It was Moved by Councillor Nagra
Seconded by Councillor Elford
That the agenda of the Focus Newton
Task Force Committee meeting of April 24, 2023, be adopted.
Carried

2. Adoption of the March 17, 2023 Minutes

It was Moved by Councillor Nagra
Seconded by Councillor Elford
That the minutes of the Focus Newton Task
Force Committee meeting held on March 17, 2023, be adopted.
Carried

The agenda was varied to address item B.1 after section C – Outstanding Business.

C. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS**1. Terms of Reference – Proposed Amendment**

The Task Force reviewed the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference.

It was Moved by Councillor Nagra
Seconded by Councillor Elford
That the Focus Newton Task Force
recommend that Council approve the Terms of Reference, as amended.
Carried

2. Update - Housing & Homelessness

The General Manager of Community Services provided an update on housing and homelessness as part of the presentation under item B.1..

3. Update - Services for Youth & New Immigrants at Newton Public Library

The General Manager, Investment and Intergovernmental Relations, highlighted various programs aimed at assisting immigrant youth, such as the immigrant youth writing contest and English classes, as well as services designed to support new immigrant students. In addition, the Task Force was advised that the Chief Librarian will attend the June 12 to provide a comprehensive overview of existing Library services for youth and newcomers, as well as to propose potential enhancements.

The Task Force requested input from the Chief Librarian regarding facilitating faster and more efficient integration of immigrants into the community, and information about current services available to help newcomers quickly adjust and orient themselves in Surrey.

4. Update - Focus Newton Clean Up & Beautification

The General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture, provided the following update regarding Focus Newton Clean Up and Beautification:

- Focus Newton Clean Up and Beautification aims to beautify Newton and address community concerns through cleanup projects. The Newton Green Team, a community group actively involved in the area, was mentioned along with the Serpentine Right-of-Way Park as a significant location.
- To address litter and cleanliness, specific priorities were identified, with contractors responsible for weekly litter collection in high-traffic areas such as arterial streets and sidewalks. Weekly litter collection was also carried out in the main street area and their surroundings. In preparation for the summer season, a major cleanup will be conducted in May, with a focus on responding to demand areas and tackling issues like large items and illegal dumping. The Task Force was informed about the process of reporting illegal dumping to the city through an app or phone, with a guaranteed response time.

- Approximately one-third of all large item pickups citywide occurred in the Newton area in 2022, and individuals can schedule free pickups. The City also organized specific disposal days at key locations and promoted these opportunities through local South Asian radio stations.
- Newton has high usage of its local parks, and Newton Athletic Park and Bear Creek Park receive particular attention, with daily cleanups and garbage collection conducted in these parks. Other neighborhood parks undergo biweekly litter pick-ups. Natural areas are scheduled for semi-annual pick-ups, but issues are also addressed promptly as they arise. The City performs annual tree inspections and maintains sports fields, playgrounds, and high-traffic gathering areas. Collaboration with sports organizations ensured field maintenance and cleanliness. A parking attendant program was implemented in Bear Creek due to ongoing construction, effectively managing public spaces. Staff presence in high-volume parks helps identify and address issues, including litter pickup and RCMP matters.
- To encourage community ownership and positive park utilization, the City planned the return of the Play Program for the summer. This program includes pop-up park programs in different locations, with Goldstone Community Park serving as a primary site throughout the season. Additionally, a summer park cleanup program is organized, featuring focused clean-up blitzes in specific parks. Pop-up signage will be used to raise awareness and engage the community, encouraging volunteer participation in significant cleanup efforts. Unwin Park was chosen as one of the parks for summer clean-up, while community picnics will be organized at Sullivan Park and Goldstone Park. The goal is to activate parks, promote positive utilization, foster community connections, and facilitate neighbor interactions. The City's dedicated stewardship squad focused on addressing invasive species, with planned activities in TE Scott, Hazelnut, and Sullivan Park throughout the summer.
- In terms of beautification, multiple initiatives are currently in progress. One initiative is the street banner program, where each town center area receives banners with specific goals. In May, new Newton banners will be installed along 72 Avenue, King George Boulevard, and the gateway entering Delta. Public art banners near the arts center on King George Boulevard will also be displayed, showcasing local artistic talent, and adding vibrancy to the area. Another initiative is the market program, which optimizes parking spots for a market setup. This year, a partnership with a studio that engages individuals with disabilities will bring public art installations to the market location on 138 Street in the Main Street area. Seasonal lighting is part of the beautification efforts as well, brightening the community from November to January. Planters are installed to enhance the aesthetic appeal, particularly during the unique summer season, while winter lights create a warm and welcoming atmosphere.
- The City has planned extensive promotion for the Community Enhancement Grants and will organize workshops specifically targeted at the Newton Center area. These grants provide funding opportunities for

community groups, with a total of \$45,000 available through the city. Although there have been no applications for events in smaller town centers, other town centers have seen active applications for grants related to beautification projects, community cleanups, and other initiatives. The City is committed to generating more interest and engagement in the Newton Center area by intensifying promotional efforts. It is anticipated that increased community involvement will result in better outcomes and improvements.

- The City is organizing numerous community events, which have been growing year over year and achieving significant success. During these events, street teams, community engagement teams, and the Newton team will actively promote and highlight various initiatives, engaging with attendees through surveys and interactions. Past successful events include Car-Free Day which garnered a substantial turnout and positive responses. Continued participation in such events will enhance community involvement and contribute to the overall success and enjoyment of upcoming events.
- In spring and summer, one of the main focuses will be to address parking-related issues and improve parking management. Additionally, there will be a focus on refreshing and cleaning the community's banners, ensuring they remain vibrant and appealing.
- The City will soon launch citywide initiatives, with a specific emphasis on the Newton area. Details about these initiatives will be presented at a future Council meeting. The goal is to engage the community and involve them in various activities and programs, with a focus on clean-up and beautification efforts. The initiatives will also include branding efforts for the Focus Newton campaign and provide opportunities for community empowerment.

In response to questions from the Task Force, staff provided the following information:

- The City acknowledges the issue of increased littering at the end of the month, especially when landlords deposit large amounts of waste in popular areas. To address this, staff members are actively coordinating pickups and scheduling timely cleanups in the neighborhood. Collaboration with the Green Team and City staff is ongoing to ensure quick responses in high-volume areas. Efforts are also being made to monitor and address illegal dumping activities, including identifying patterns and responding effectively.
- Using media channels to inform the community about free pickup services is a suggestion worth considering. By increasing awareness, the City hopes to reduce the need for residents to report issues and instead encourage responsible waste disposal practices. The City will explore effective communication strategies to ensure residents are aware of available services for free pickups.

- The large item pickup program was introduced in 2005, replacing the previous spring cleanup program. While it took some time for the program to gain awareness and participation initially, it has been successful overall. Each household is allowed to place up to four large items for pickup per year, and any unused allocations cannot be carried over to the next year. The program has expanded over time to include a wider range of materials, such as furniture, appliances, tires, and renovation materials. The cost of the program is included in the annual waste collection fees, so residents do not have to pay extra for this service.
- Illegal dumping, particularly in the Newton area, is a significant issue. Efforts have been made to address this issue, including analyzing dumping patterns, installing cameras, and increasing public awareness through signage and advertising. However, the effectiveness of these measures and the extent of the issue in recent years would require further evaluation from the Engineering department. It is crucial to focus on areas with high dumping rates and explore effective strategies to mitigate the problem.
- Addressing the issue of garbage pickup and cleanliness is vital for enhancing civic pride and reducing littering incidents. Allocating additional tasks and workers to clean specific areas, such as the Serpentine trail and railway tracks, is a suggestion that could be considered. The issue of garbage in neighborhoods, including those with legal suites, can be complex. While the City offers different sizes of garbage cans based on the number of suites and residents' preferences, challenges may arise when the allocated can is insufficient for the waste generated, especially in cases of unregistered or illegal suites.

B. PRESENTATIONS

1. **Brian Edwards, Assistant Commissioner, and Shawn Gill, Surrey RCMP, Larry Thomas, Fire Chief, Fire, Terry Waterhouse, General Manager, Community Services, Rob Costanzo, General Manager, Corporate Services**

Each public safety partner presented updates and suggested programs aligned with the Task Force's goals.

The General Manager, Community Services, provided the following update:

- The Newton Integrated Safety Team includes RCMP, Bylaws, Fire and local stakeholders who meet regularly to raise and monitor issues in Newton regarding public safety.
- Projects and initiatives are reported out on to increase awareness among partners.
- Neighbourhood-specific trends and issues are identified to collaboratively address them, such as forming the Clayton Heights Activity Team (CHAT) to address disconnected youth in the Clayton area.
- Street racing in the Campbell Heights industrial area has become a significant issue, and stakeholders met in August 2022 to discuss solutions with the participation of Community Safety's Stakeholder Engagement Manager.

- SAFE program and South Asian Family Strengthening Program each focus on South Asian families and are delivered by Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS) with grant funding.
- Redevelopment of the Kekinow Housing will provide affordable housing for Indigenous people.
- Newton has 13 out of 53 licensed recovery homes in Surrey, which serve as transitional housing for individuals with substance use disorders.
- These recovery homes are overseen by the Province's Assisted Living Registry and must have a housing agreement and a valid business license.
- Seven of the 13 recovery homes in Newton are in the process of obtaining their housing agreements.

The General Manager, Corporate Services, provided the following update:

- Community Patrol Officers are deployed to address core issues in Newton including homelessness, unsightliness caused by vagrancy and homelessness, garbage, and parking issues.
- The joint program/initiative with the RCMP addresses homeless camps, homelessness issues affecting public (public shelters taken over, street obstructions), problem properties within the Newton area, and public events.
- Community Patrol Officers are working daily between 7AM and 11PM to respond and assist.
- In 2022 there were 1,353 homelessness related bylaw complaints.
- In 2022 there were 2,894 bylaw related property maintenance issues/unsightly premise complaints.
- In 2022 there were 126 businesses investigated for illegal signage.
- 35% of illegal dumping service requests from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 were from the Newton area.
- 22% of the Litter Related Service Requests from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 were from the Newton area.
- The Street SMART Team is a team of bylaw officers deployed to patrol the area in Newton.
- Bylaw Services and the RCMP have a joint program to patrol the Newton area and increase visibility in the area. Patrols in designated areas operate 7 days a week from spring through fall, identifying problem locations and offering outreach to the homeless.

The Fire Chief provided the following update:

- HomeSafe is a Residential door to door fire prevention education program to reduce fires and injuries.
- To accommodate additional staff being assigned to the Southeast Newton fire hall, a new fire truck is being ordered.
- Distressed Properties program is a Community Property Safety Team that monitors residential locations that have been abandoned and have become a fire risk.
- Response to fires or encampments in natural lands is a current initiative for fires in parks and natural lands that are reported for follow up by bylaws and parks staff.

- Fire Smart program is for Natural land interface properties that are provided fire safety mailout.

The Assistant Commissioner, and Chief Superintendent, Surrey RCMP, provided the following update:

- Community Response Unit (CRU) is a multi-person unit with the purpose to pro-actively identify and address prolific offenders, emerging trends, crime hot spots, and taking steps to address the root causes of crime through strategic partnerships, innovative thinking and engage various initiatives.
- Safety and the perception of safety in the Newton are associated with homeless individuals and chronic offenders.
- Criminal Activity is transient in nature and not isolated to any specific district.
- The bylaws bike patrol in the Newton area allows for a more robust pro active and re active coordinated response to address the needs within the Newton Core.
- As a result of rapid development in Surrey Central, numerous unhoused persons have been displaced into the Newton area.
- CRU and the Surrey RCMP Crime Prevention Coordinator meet one on one with the local businesses educating them on Crime Prevention measures that can be taken, through Environmental Design (CPTED), to help target harden their businesses.
- CRU has sought to find innovative ways to resolve community concerns, and formed the Social Chronic Team, consisting of CRU, RCMP Police Mental Health Outreach Team (PMHOT), Commissionaires and outreach agencies.
- Theft from auto statistics showed converter thefts occurring in Newton and the other districts. Catalytic Converter thefts have increased throughout North America. CRU is currently working on reducing catalytic converter thefts working with various partners through crime reduction measures not limited to education and enforcement.
- Every 28 days, the Surrey RCMP monthly Crime Reduction Report is disseminated to all units within the RCMP. The Community Response Unit Zone and District Commander in Newton review the analyst report, to determine emerging crime trends in the area, and strategize ways to rectify concerns.
- Health Canada granted an exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to the Province of B.C. This is effective from January 31, 2023, to January 31, 2026. There have been no indications of a large increase in drug use or crimes associated to drug use within the Newton Core. Crime Reduction Reports continue to indicate a reduction in crime from last year, continuing in 2023.
- Surrey RCMP Community Response Unit works with the Surrey RCMP Crime Prevention Coordinators to engage with the public throughout the year, build trust and provide a relaxed environment for the public to voice concerns.

In response to questions from the Task Force, staff provided the following information:

- Regarding internal displacement and concerns about problems from the 137A Street area affecting Newton, a coordinated approach between agencies and organizations was emphasized.
- Addressing underlying issues such as poverty, addiction, mental health, and homelessness was deemed crucial, with support and resources needed to prevent individuals from becoming part of the street entrenched population.
- Collaboration between government levels, social service agencies, and community organizations was highlighted as essential for providing support and sustainable solutions.
- Increasing community engagement and education on bylaw regulations could help prevent future violations.
- Maintaining an open dialogue between the community and bylaw officers was encouraged for addressing concerns and finding solutions together.
- Collaboration between service providers, including police, fire department, and social service agencies, was also emphasized.
- Creating a service model that leads to increased solutions and collaboration rather than problems was a goal.
- The importance of police presence in schools by school liaison officers to understand the community and show a presence was discussed.

D. NEW BUSINESS

1. Focus Newton Public Engagement Framework

The General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture, provided information regarding the Focus Newton Public Engagement Framework as follows:

- The community engagement plan for the Newton area consists of two phases that will be discussed further in future meetings.
- The Plan includes the possibility of setting up booths at community events and sports tournaments to reach a wider audience.
- The information collected during the engagement process will be used to create an action plan.
- The action plan will be presented to the Task Force and Council for further consideration.

The Task Force suggested that open houses be scheduled on weekends to accommodate more people, especially during community events and tournaments.

E. CORRESPONDENCE

This section had no items to consider.

F. INFORMATION ITEMS

This section had no items to consider.

G. OTHER BUSINESS

This section had no items to consider.

H. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Focus Newton Task Force is proposed to be held on Monday, May 8, 2023 at 12:15 p.m. in 1E – Community Room B.

I. ADJOURNMENT

It was

be adjourned.

Moved by Councillor Nagra

Seconded by Councillor Elford

That the Focus Newton Task Force meeting

Carried

The Focus Newton Task Force adjourned at 2:22 p.m.

Jennifer Ficocelli, City Clerk

Councillor Bains, Chairperson

NOTE: Starting May 1, 2023, the Focus Newton Task Force will meet informally. Formal minutes will no longer be produced.

**FOCUS NEWTON TASK FORCE COMMITTEE
RECOMMENDATION INDEX
Monday, April 24, 2023**

NOTE: This recommendation was adopted prior to the receipt of the minutes at the May 1, 2023 Regular Council – Public Hearing meeting.

1. Terms of Reference – Proposed Amendment

That Council approve the Focus Newton Task Force Terms of Reference, as amended (attached as Appendix "I").