

Present:

Councillor Locke, Chair
G. Bremault, Vice-Chair
A. Dhillon
A. Willis
C. Mohr
M. Cheema
N. Chima
N. Nastoh
S. Andhi Bilkhu

Absent:

A. Begalka
S. Kular

Staff Present:

A. Murphy, Senior Planner
K. Patten, Social Planner
L. Blake, Administrative Assistant

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

It was Moved by M. Cheema
Seconded by G. Bremault
That the agenda of the Social Equity and
Diversity Committee meeting held January 8, 2020 be adopted.
Carried

2. Adoption of the Minutes - December 4, 2019

It was Moved by M. Cheema
Seconded by N. Nastoh
That the minutes of the Social Equity and
Diversity Committee meeting held December 4, 2019 be adopted as presented.
Carried

B. DELEGATIONS**1. Amos Kambere, Executive Director
Umoja Operation Compassion Society**

The delegation provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding Umoja and refugee integration in Surrey and highlighted the following information:

- Refugees are a global issue. As of June 2019, Umoja has provided assistance to refugee families from Sudan, Eritrea, Iraq, Syria, Congo, Burundi, Somalia and Latin America. By the time refugees have come to Canada, they often are weary and have lost hope. While they may feel a sense of peace being safe from war in Canada, they may also feel isolated due to cultural and language and literacy limitations. Families often have challenges finding housing due to prejudice by landlords and family size.

- 60% of refugees are children and have experienced disastrous situations and/or been separated from or lost family members while living in refugee camps or fleeing violence.
- Housing challenges for newcomers and refugees include:
 - The high cost of rent;
 - Landlord restrictions on number of occupants to a bedroom;
 - Lack of English-speaking skills or computer literacy;
 - Credit and reference check requirements;
 - Detailed and time-consuming rent application forms; and
 - Landlords refusing to rent to welfare recipients due to rent defaulting fears.
- Umoja provides a range of programs including out-of-school programs for refugee children and a men's outreach program for Syrian refugees.
- Umoja recommends that Surrey require a certain number of square feet per housing development be allocated to low-income housing and should ensure there is available affordable housing as the city welcomes newcomers.

Aileen Murphy, Senior Planner, advised that the housing needs report that the Province is requiring all cities to complete would be an opportunity to examine housing issues for newcomers and refugees. Ms. Murphy also noted that the City's Affordable Housing Strategy focuses on rental housing and identifies strategies for increasing the supply of affordable rental housing in Surrey.

The Committee noted the following comments:

- A database of rental units in the city could be useful for Umoja. It was suggested that Umoja could rent out properties on behalf of refugees.
- Long-term affordable rental accommodations for refugees are needed as the number of refugees is expected to continue. Housing should be able to meet the specific needs of refugees, including units for large families.
- The City could consider incentives for landlords to encourage them to rent to refugees.
- The Committee could recommend that the Federal Government reconsider the timeframe that refugees are eligible for assistance.

Staff advised that information regarding potential incentives, such as a tax incentives, for landlords to rent to refugees can be brought forward at a future meeting.

C. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS

1. Homelessness/Housing Updates

Aileen Murphy, Senior Planner, advised that no update is available at this time.

2. Extreme Weather Response

Aileen Murphy, Senior Planner, advised that there have been 34 emergency weather response (EWR) alerts so far this season and approximately 60 individuals have utilized mats in Surrey and White Rock. The shelters at the Friendship Centre, Phoenix Society, and Peninsula United Church have had the highest numbers of guests during EWR alerts.

3. Vulnerable Women and Girls Working Group – BC Community Homelessness Grant

Aileen Murphy, Senior Planner, reported that the Vulnerable Women and Girls Working Group received a BC Community Homelessness Grant from SPARCBC. The grant will provide funding for the Working Group for the next 18 months and allow for strategic planning, two forums and continuation of their work to understand the unique issues of vulnerable females in Surrey and support and advocate for improved policies and services to better meet their needs .

D. NEW BUSINESS**1. Surrey Housing Summit – February 6, 2020**

Aileen Murphy, Senior Planner, advised that the Surrey Housing Summit has been scheduled for February 6, 2020. Committee members interested in attending should let us know.

2. Coldest Night of the Year – February 22, 2020

Aileen Murphy, Senior Planner, advised that the Coldest Night of the Year event has been scheduled for February 22, 2020.

3. Metro Vancouver Homeless Count – March 3 & 4, 2020

Kristin Patten, Social Planner, advised that the 2020 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count has been scheduled for March 3 and 4. The Count is coordinated by the BC Non-Profit Housing Association and has a specific methodology and questions to ensure consistency across the region.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Murphy advised that individuals in recovery homes are not considered homeless as per the Count's criteria.

The Committee requested a presentation from the Metro Vancouver Housing team at a future meeting.

E. ITEMS REFERRED BY COUNCIL**F. CORRESPONDENCE**

G. INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Committee Recommendation Referral to 2021 Budget Process

H. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Future Agenda Items

The Committee requested a presentation from the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee at the February 5, 2020 meeting.

2. Committee Member Updates

- Sonia Andhi Bilkhu advised that the Shakti Awards will be held on March 7, 2020 and nominations are currently being accepted. The Shakti Society will also be co-hosting a women's summit called "Women Shaping Surrey: Towards a Women-Friendly City" on February 23, 2020 at City Hall. The purpose of the summit is to engage women in City governance.
- Nav Chima reported that Dr. Joy Johnson was recently appointed as Simon Fraser University's new President and Vice-Chancellor. Dr. Johnson's appointment will begin September 1, 2020.
- Gerard Bremault reported that Amarjit Sahota has joined Sophie's Place as its new Vice-President beginning in March 2020. Mr. Bremault also expressed appreciation to the members of the Childcare Task Force, especially Laurie Cavan, General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture and Daljit Gill-Badesha, Healthy Communities Manager, for their work on developing a Child Care Strategy.

I. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Social Equity and Diversity Committee will be held on Wednesday, February 5, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. in 2E Community Room B.

J. ADJOURNMENT

It was

Moved by A. Dhillon
Seconded by A. Willis
That the Social Equity and Diversity

Committee meeting do now adjourn.

Carried

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Jennifer Ficocelli, City Clerk

Councillor Brenda Locke, Chair