

Present:

Councillor Locke, Chair
G. Bremault, Vice-Chair
A. Begalka
A. Dhillon
A. Willis
N. Chima
N. Nastoh
S. Andhi Bilkhu
S. Kular

Absent:

C. Mohr
M. Cheema

Staff Present:

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

Guest:

C. Jacques, Connecting Community to Surrey Youth
Aging Out of Care, Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition

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

It was Moved by G. Bremault
Seconded by S. Andhi Bilkhu
That the agenda of the Social Equity and
Diversity Committee meeting held May 6, 2020 be adopted.
Carried

2. Adoption of the February 5, 2020 Minutes

It was Moved by G. Bremault
Seconded by N. Chima
That the minutes of the Social Equity and
Diversity Committee meeting held February 5, 2020 be adopted as presented.
Carried

B. DELEGATIONS**1. Cody Jacques, Connecting Community to Surrey Youth Aging Out of Care, Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition**

The delegation provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding a project conducted by the Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition to support Surrey youth aging out of the government care system called 'Connecting Community to Surrey Youth From Care'. The following information was highlighted:

- Between 2015 and 2016, 54 young people in the South Fraser region aged out the government care system at age 19 years; most no longer received support from the Ministry of Child and Family Development. There has been a continued trend of young people from care struggling with poverty and other poor outcomes when they leave the care system. In response to this issue, the Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition began a project to 'connect the community' to support young people ageing out of care.

- In 2016, The Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition hosted community workshops to discuss how to improve outcomes for children ageing out of care. Individuals who had previously aged out of care shared their experiences and it was identified that young peoples' voices are not being heard. In response, the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) was formed to allow youth to actively participate and advocate for systemic changes.
- In February 2017, a group of young people who were in or from the care system joined the YAC and stayed over the entire term of the project. At the first YAC meeting, youth identified the need for a camp experience for youth in care. YAC members, with adult support, organized a youth retreat to support two goals: help the youth gain experience and provide feedback regarding where policy direction and programming could be directed in Surrey and; provide youth with a camp experience they likely did not have during their time in the care system. Two retreats were held for 18 participants in 2017 and 2019.
- YAC members attended conferences, local planning groups and regional gatherings, as well as participated in a podcast with a child and youth care specialist and advocated for system changes. In 2019, 54 youth received awards during BC Child and Youth in Care week for demonstrating leadership in the community.
- As youth coming out of care are often not connected to family and may spend holidays alone, a holiday dinner program was created. The project hosted holiday dinners on Family Day, Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. In 2019, there were 40 participants in the Christmas Day dinner.
- Connecting Community did research and implemented prototype projects to test out innovative ways to support youth ageing out of care including:
 - The McCreary Centre Society was contracted to compile information on youth in and from care. A report and fact sheet was prepared.
 - A project working group conducted research around the most needed housing supports.
 - The Plenty of Threads prototype project provided youth who have aged out of care with connections to professional, working adults. The youth could access the adults for a coffee meeting to explore career goals.
 - The Compass Connections prototype project provided youth with an immediate connection to supportive adults. Adult volunteers were available to respond to questions or offer advice with no strings attached and filled in the gap of an organic support system. The program was a success and the youth were able to access a variety of life-skills information ranging from how to access a vet for a sick pet to learning to swim.

- Moving forward, Connecting Community will focus on expanding the prototype projects and facilitating radical youth engagement, continue to reach out to hard to reach youth and collaborate with partners at every level of the support system.

The Commission provided the following comments:

- Members of the YAC felt like leaders, were supported and felt heard during the YAC process. Members were able to participate in high-level conferences.
- Upon the conclusion of the Connecting Community project, the organizers conducted research to determine why the project was so successful at keeping YAC members together for so long. The Committee members advised that they valued the youth leadership, being asked what they wanted to do and what the project meant to them. Youth and their needs were at the core of the project throughout the process.
- The COVID-19 may impact youth who have transitioned from the care system and presents unique situations for these individuals. For example, there are issues with the closure of post-secondary schools, reduction in transit services that have resulted in alternative transportation methods taking up an additional portion of youths' budgets and additional pressures on an already stressed rental housing market. Youth that are in a youth agreement program are not eligible for the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB).
- The original funding for the Connecting Community project was provided by the Vancouver Foundation, with additional funding from Envision and Coast Capital. The SPRC is currently seeking funding for the next phase of the project. This includes individual donors who can provide smaller funding amounts to assist with programs such as the holiday dinners, and youth retreats.

Aileen Murphy, Senior Planner, advised that funding applications have been submitted to continue the Connecting Community project. It is anticipated that a final report regarding the program will be available by summer 2020.

The Committee requested a copy of the final report when it is available to see where the Committee can provide assistance.

C. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS

1. Extreme Weather Response Update

Kristin Patten, Social Planner, provided an overview of Surrey's extreme weather response (EWR) shelter occupancy rates as compared to neighbouring cities and summarized the on-table report (attached to the agenda package) from the BC Housing Management Commission. The following information was highlighted:

- The following occupancy rates were reported:
 - With six EWR shelters, Burnaby, Langley, Maple Ridge, New Westminister, Port Coquitlam and North Vancouver had a combined occupancy rate of 46.70%;
 - With six EWR shelters opened, Vancouver had an occupancy rate of 62.54%;
 - With one EWR shelter opened, Delta had an occupancy rate of 18.77%;
 - With eight EWR shelters opened, Surrey had an occupancy rate of 43.97%; and
 - With one EWR shelter opened, White Rock had an occupancy rate of 54.35%.
- Burnaby, Langley, Maple Ridge, New Westminister, Port Coquitlam and North Vancouver had a total of 3,153 occupied beds over the winter.
- Vancouver had a total of 5,172 occupied beds over the winter.
- Surrey had a total of 3,145 occupied beds over the winter.
- The numbers suggest that Surrey is over-reliant on EWR beds to meet the needs of unhoused people that need shelter.

Aileen Murphy, Senior Social Planner, noted that total number of beds occupied in Surrey over the EWR season is very high

The Committee requested that staff remove the Fleetwood shelter from the occupancy rate calculation, as it was often empty and skews Surrey's results.

2. Homeless Count Debrief

Aileen Murphy, Senior Planner, advised that the 2020 Homeless Count was conducted March 3 and 4, 2020. The results of the count have not yet been released. Staff and Committee members shared their volunteer experiences and the following information was highlighted:

Aileen Murphy, Senior Planner

- Volunteered two evenings, the first night was at the Surrey Urban Mission and interviewed individuals while they came in for dinner and to secure a shelter spot. The second night was at Night Shift parking lot while a food truck was distributing meals.

- The Surrey Urban Mission was an easier location to conduct the count compared to the Night Shift parking lot while patrons were eating.
- The diversity of people counted was notable. Ages ranged from 23 to people well into their 60s. The majority of people were long-time Surrey residents.
- The residents interviewed had a range of experiences. For example, one resident was experiencing his first night of being homeless, due to circumstances.
- The count methodology was a challenge due to the length of the questionnaire.
- Residents are looking forward to purpose-built housing. The temporary shelters do not provide ideal living conditions.

Nav Chima, Simon Fraser University

- Volunteered during the afternoon near 135A Street. A “guide” from within that community directed volunteers to specific residents to speak to.
- There were many well-educated individuals identified during the count.
- There were interesting dynamics of the 135A Street community. There were a lot of couples and residents who liked and did not like each other.
- There was a variety of reasons as to why individuals became unhoused. Efforts should be made to breakdown stereotypes as to why an individual can become homeless.
- The count methodology was a challenge due to the length of the questionnaire.
- Volunteering for the Count was a positive, eye-opening experience that can change an individual’s perspective.

Amanda Willis, Committee Member

- Volunteered at a shelter in Cloverdale.
- Many residents became homeless due to circumstantial situations, such as health issues or work-related injuries.
- Individuals who were newer to homelessness reported a different experience compared to more experienced individuals.
- Residents appeared to appreciate the questionnaire and sharing their story.
- The count was an important experience to participate in. It can teach participants about their privilege.

The Committee noted the following comments:

- It would be ideal if all shelters were accredited to make them all respectful, clean and adhere to basic standards.
- Concerns were expressed that the count will not be accurate and so not reflect the reality of the unhoused population in Surrey.
- It was questioned how safe unhoused women felt, especially if they became unhoused due to domestic violence.
- Stories could be captured in writing or on video to pair with the data generated from the count.

The Committee requested to review the final report that is generated by the count. If the numbers for Surrey appear too low, the Committee could consider recommending that the City fund its own count.

D. NEW BUSINESS

1. Update on COVID-19 and Vulnerable Populations

Aileen Murphy, Senior Planner, provided the following updates regarding COVID-19 and vulnerable populations:

Emergency Response Centre for Homeless People

- The City has partnered with BC Housing and Fraser Health to respond to homeless residents' needs during the COVID-19 crisis.
- On April 7, 2020, the North Surrey Recreation Centre was opened as an emergency response centre for symptomatic individuals who need to isolate. Nurses are available onsite for 7 – 12 hours per day to provide support and testing.
- BC Housing has secured 46 motel rooms for individuals living in shelters to create proper social-distancing room and an additional 10 rooms are being set aside for individuals who are COVID positive.
- There have been no confirmed COVID outbreaks in Surrey's homeless population to date.

Vulnerable Population Groups

- Social Planning has been convening different sector tables, requesting organizations and funders to identify key emerging issues regarding vulnerable population groups during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Community partners have been sharing resources and best practices, as well as documenting the crisis.
- Food security, access to basic needs, mental health, domestic violence and access to education through technology have been identified as critical issues.
- Surrey Libraries has excellent resources and information available on its website at <https://www.surreylibraries.ca/services/community-services/covid-19-information-and-programs>

E. ITEMS REFERRED BY COUNCIL

F. CORRESPONDENCE

G. INFORMATION ITEMS

1. **Corporate Report R022
Social Equity and Diversity Committee – Terms of Reference**

H. OTHER BUSINESS

1. **Upcoming Agenda Items**

There were no items.

2. **Committee Member Updates**

- Sonia Andhi Bilkhu advised that the Shakti Awards were held prior to the COVID-19 crisis and was a successful, inspiring night with close to 400 attendees. Ms. Bilkhu thanked the Committee for its support. Ms. Bilkhu advised that she can provide a report regarding the Women Transforming Cities event at the June 3 meeting.
- Nav Chima reported that the Surrey Simon Fraser University campus activated its labs to create 800 bottles of liquid hand sanitizer for community distribution. It is anticipated that the Burnaby campus will also activate its labs and that Surrey campus will produce an additional round of sanitizer. Mr. Chima noted that there was an excellent article in the April 30 Surrey Now Leader thanking front-line workers during the COVID crisis. The article is available online.
- Councillor Locke reported that she has been participating in a bagged-meal program providing two meals a day for street entrenched individuals and residents living in shelters. The program has been well-supported by donations from residents and the business community.

I. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Social Equity and Diversity Committee will be held on Wednesday, June 3, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. The location is to be announced.

J. ADJOURNMENT

It was

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

Committee meeting do now adjourn.

Carried

The meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Jennifer Ficocelli, City Clerk

Councillor Brenda Locke, Chair