

Present:

Councillor Locke, Chair
G. Bremault, Vice-Chair
A. Begalka
A. Dhillon
C. Mohr
N. Chima
N. Nastoh

Absent:

A. Willis
M. Cheema
S. Andhi Bilkhu
S. Kular

Staff Present:

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

Guests:

Bertha Edward, ACORN Canada
Sebastian Sajda, ACORN Canada
Murray Martin, ACORN Canada

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

It was Moved by G. Bremault
Seconded by A. Dhillon
That the agenda of the Social Equity and
Diversity Committee meeting held October 7, 2020 be adopted.
Carried

2. Adoption of the Minutes – September 10, 2020

It was Moved by G. Bremault
Seconded by A. Dhillon
That the minutes of the Social Equity and
Diversity Committee meeting held September 10, 2020 be adopted as presented.
Carried

B. DELEGATIONS**1. Bertha Edward, ACORN Canada**

Bertha Edward, Sebastian Sajda and Murray Martin, ACORN Canada, provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding ACORN Stand Up for Housing report and platform. The following information was highlighted:

- ACORN is the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now and represents over 130,000 low to moderate income residents across Canada. ACORN focusses on issues that affect its members, such as rental housing. In BC, almost 50% of renters are contributing more than 30% of their income to housing, which is unsustainable long-term.

- Municipalities can influence housing through policies, zoning and bylaws to protect tenants and support affordable housing. The Stand Up for Housing in Surrey report highlights case studies of municipal policies and regulations from New Westminister and Burnaby.
 - New Westminister has implemented a landlord licensing program and adopted a renoviction bylaw. Landlords can have their business license revoked or be issued fines if they do not comply with the standards set out in the renoviction bylaw. The renoviction bylaw removes financial incentives of renovicting a tenant and requires that a purpose-built rental building remain in good condition so that a renoviction situation is not necessary.
 - Burnaby has a Tenant Assistance Policy that provides tenants living in a rental apartment on a site that is redeveloped with the right to return to the new development at the same rent (plus any Residential Tenancy Act increases). It was noted that the right of first refusal for a new rental building is not helpful if the rent is substantially increased. These policies allow renters to remain in their neighbourhood and stops the mass displacement of tenants through demovictions.
 - Burnaby also has a rent stabilization program that applies when renters are required to be relocated due to redevelopment. This program provides rent top-up payments to cover additional costs and enables tenants to remain in their neighbourhood during the construction phase. The rental top-up rates are set at levels to allow tenants to rent an apartment in the same community.
- Tenant issues in Surrey include tenant displacement, renovictions, COVID-19 related evictions and demovictions (the failure to ensure that tenants can remain in their community when a rental building is demolished).
- Substandard housing is an issue throughout Surrey. To address this, the City's Standards of Maintenance Bylaw could be updated. This bylaw ensures that landlords must maintain their property up to a certain standard. Properties that are properly maintained also will not require major upgrades that could result in either renovictions or demovictions.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Edward, Mr. Sajda and Mr. Martin provided the following information:

- Rental housing is typically not built for low- or moderate-income residents. The rental population is segmented (low, moderate and higher income) and rental housing is needed for all income-levels. This is especially important to consider when new rental developments are built, as there must be low-income and affordable rental units built along with market-rental projects.

- ACORN received a significant surge in phone calls from Surrey residents about evictions during COVID-19, especially since September 2020 when the provincial moratorium on evictions was lifted. Renters will be required to pay back COVID-19 related rent-debt by July 2021.

In addition, Aileen Murphy, Senior Planner, advised that the City has launched a housing needs study, which will include a thorough review of housing data as well as engage the community to determine their needs. There will be a series of workshops focusing on specific issues, such as seniors and rental housing, as well as a Community Ambassador program to engage various population groups. It is anticipated that the Housing Needs Report will be finalized in May 2021.

The Committee noted the following comments:

- All types of housing security and vulnerability, from shelters to permanent housing, is an issue throughout the city.
- As Surrey's population continues to grow, there should be more support from the Metro Vancouver Housing Corporation, including upgrades to existing housing developments.
- The COVID-19 pandemic could be used as an opportunity to try new housing ideas that may not be implemented otherwise.

It was

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

Committee recommend that:

1. The City of Surrey act immediately to address the heightened risk of eviction of Surrey tenants during COVID 19; and
2. Council write a letter to the Province requesting that the rental eviction moratorium be reinstated and COVID-19 related rent debt be cancelled.

Before the question was put, it was suggested that staff first prepare a report that would provide background information on this issue.

It was

Moved by G. Bremault
Seconded by N. Nastoh
That the Social Equity and Diversity Committee

direct staff to prepare a report providing background information about the provincial rental moratorium and the heightened risk of eviction of Surrey tenants during COVID-19.

Carried

C. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS**1. Anti-Racism Task Force Update**

Councillor Locke, Chair, advised that at the October 5, 2020 Regular Council – Public Hearing meeting, Council approved a Council Initiatives Grant of \$40,000 for the Anti-Racism Task Force. The funding will be utilized to hire a consultant and conduct engagement.

Aileen Murphy, Senior Planner, advised that the Task Force should be operational by January 2021 and completed by December 2021, providing a final report to the Committee. A workplan will be drafted and a Request for Proposals (RFP) will be created for an experienced and skilled consultant to facilitate the Task Force's work. Committee members can forward consultant recommendations to staff.

2. COVID-19 Homeless Response Update

Aileen Murphy, Senior Planner, provided the following update regarding the COVID-19 homeless response:

- There has not been a significant outbreak of COVID-19 amongst the homeless population.
- The Emergency Response Centre located at the decommissioned North Surrey Recreation Centre has approximately 40 guests.
- The rooms secured by BC Housing in two motels as 'isolation centres' and to reduce the numbers in overcrowded shelters, operated by Options Community Services, have approximately 47 guests. There are still rooms reserved for individuals who are diagnosed with COVID or who have COVID-like symptoms.
- The Elizabeth Fry Society is operating hotel rooms for women and women with children.

The Committee noted that shelter workers are important frontline workers and deserve recognition.

3. Phase 2 Modular Housing Update

Kristin Patten, Social Planner, provided the following update regarding Phase 2 modular housing:

- There were three temporary modular housing projects erected on leased-land in 2018: Nickerson Place, Nancy Gerard and Steve Cobon. These projects were implemented to provide immediate accommodation while more permanent supportive modular housing was developed. Three sites have been identified for more permanent supportive modular housing projects:
 - Modular housing will be built at Peterson Place in Whalley. Construction is currently underway. It is anticipated that the project will be open in late Fall 2020.

- A second site has been selected in Guildford located beside the Real Canadian Superstore on 104 Avenue. Construction is underway. This project will open next spring 2021.
- A third site has been selected in Newton located at 80 Street and King George Boulevard. The site is owned by TransLink and is being leased to the City and then subleased to BC Housing. The leases are currently being finalized. An existing restaurant onsite will be demolished to make space for modular housing. This project will open in summer 2021.

4. Civic Distinction Awards – Heart Award Update

Kristin Patten, Social Planner, advised that the Civic Distinction awards Heart Award recognizes the outstanding contributions of individuals who are promoting the social well-being of Surrey residents by supporting vulnerable populations and strengthening the community. The deadline to submit nominations is October 16, 2020 and four nominations have been received to date. Committee members are encouraged to share the award nomination with their networks. The selection subcommittee will meet on October 20, 2020 from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. to review the nominations and recommend award recipients.

D. NEW BUSINESS

1. 2020 Homeless Count in Metro Vancouver: Preliminary Data Report

Aileen Murphy, Senior Planner, provided the following information regarding the 2020 Homeless Count in Metro Vancouver Preliminary Data report:

- The 2020 Homeless Count was conducted in early March 2020. The preliminary results of the count were released in early August and the full results are due to be released after the Provincial election in late October.
- The count is conducted every three years using the same methodology across the region to allow for comparison between municipalities as well as trends over time. The numbers presented are generally understood to be an undercount. The count is a key data source for provincial and federal funding levels.
- The key findings from the information released to date indicate the following:
 - There are 6444 homeless individuals counted in Surrey and a quarter were unsheltered.
 - There was a less than 1% increase in homelessness across the region, although Surrey experienced a 7% increase.
 - There were 209 homeless individuals counted in Langley.
 - Vancouver (2,095) counted the highest number of homeless individuals, followed by Surrey and then Langley. 3,634 people were counted across Metro Vancouver.

- A more thorough discussion of the homeless count will be included when the final report is available.

The Committee noted that due to Surrey’s size, there are areas of the city that do not get covered by the count. This is concerning since the count is utilized to allocate funding.

2. Surrey Housing Needs Report

Kristin Patten, Social Planner, provided the following information regarding the Surrey Housing Needs report:

- New Provincial legislation requires that the City complete a housing needs report by April 2022. The City received \$70,000 in funding from the Union of British Columbian Municipalities to develop the housing needs report. The purpose of the report is to better understand current and future housing needs to help inform planning in Surrey. The study will be conducted between September 2020 and April 2021.
- The report requires data collection, such as an estimation of the amount of housing units to meet current and future housing needs.
- The engagement process for the report has been adapted for COVID and includes a Project Advisory Committee, an online survey and stakeholder workshops with focus groups on key topic areas. Community Ambassadors, representing various population groups, are being utilized to survey “seldom heard” residents.
- The Housing Needs Report must include statements of need on the following topics:
 - Rental housing;
 - Affordable housing;
 - Housing for families and seniors;
 - Special needs housing;
 - Shelters and supportive housing for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness;
 - Affordable housing along the Fraser Highway Corridor Planning area; and
 - Urban Indigenous housing.

The Committee noted that there are different segments of the housing market, and ideally this can be delineated so resources are provided to fully address these different needs.

E. ITEMS REFERRED BY COUNCIL

F. CORRESPONDENCE

G. INFORMATION ITEMS

- 1. **BC Human Rights Commission Calls for Data Collection to Tackle Inequity**
National Post, September 15, 2020

H. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Upcoming Agenda Items

- Vision Zero Strategy and Road Equity, Shabnem Afzal
- Surrey Transportation Plan Update, Engineering Staff

The Committee requested that housing issues, especially related to COVID-19, be the focus of the November meeting. A presentation from Sources Community Services was suggested.

2. Committee Member Updates

The following updates were provided:

- C. Mohr advised that Options had a successful proposal for a BC Housing co-investment housing funding project. The project will be developed on King George and 81 Avenue and include 100 units of mixed income housing and two full service floors. It was noted that non-profit developments need financial assistance from the City, such as covering/waiving Development Cost Charges (DCC).
- Councillor Locke advised that she has organized approximately 26000 bagged meals for street entrenched individuals through a program at her church. The number of individuals requiring meals continues to increase.

I. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Social Equity and Diversity Committee will be held on Wednesday, November 4, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.

J. ADJOURNMENT

It was

Moved by C. Mohr
Seconded by N. Nastoh
That the Social Equity and Diversity

Committee meeting do now adjourn.

Carried

The meeting adjourned at 5:44 p.m.

Jennifer Ficocelli, City Clerk

Councillor Brenda Locke, Chair