

Minutes of the Abbotsford Homelessness Task Force meeting held Thursday June 26, 2014, at 4:04pm in the Room 530 of Abbotsford City Hall

---

Task Force Members Present: Councillor Ross – Co-Chair, J. Burkinshaw, S. Kuperis, K. Matty, K. Macdonald (part), J. McElhoes, J. Njogu, R. Seimens, and M. Welte

Council Present: Mayor Banman, Councillor Barkman, Councillor Braun (part) and Councillor Loewen

Staff Present: G. Murray – City Manager, J. Rudolph – Deputy Manager, S. Berteisen – General Manager, Planning and Development Services (part), Deputy Chief Constable – R. Lucy, B. Flitton – Legislative Services/City Clerk, B. Ozeroff – Manager of Building Permits and Licences, M. Laljee – Manager, Bylaw Enforcement, A. Martens – Continuous Improvement Coordinator, and L. Ganske – Recording Secretary

Facilitator: C. Enns – Social Planning Consultant

Public Present: 21 +

1. CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Councillor Ross called the meeting to order at 4:04pm.

2. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by J. Burkinshaw, seconded by M. Welte, that the minutes of the June 5, 2014, Homelessness Task Force meeting be adopted.

HTF24-2014

CARRIED.

3. BUSINESS OUT OF MINUTES

None.

4. DELEGATION

1. Cyrus Centre – Les Talvio

L. Talvio apologized that no youth were able to attend the presentation with him. He outlined the changes in Abbotsford over the years, noting an increase in homeless youth and the increased staff and Cyrus Centre facilities. Mr. Talvio explained that Cyrus Centre takes in youth from all over the Fraser Valley, and sometimes have to turn them away, due to lack of beds.

Mr. Talvio emphasized that these youth are not homeless for minor reasons, but that they are often fleeing harmful situations. He cautioned that many homeless youth are invisible, due to couch surfing or being taken in by someone, but that these are sometimes the most dangerous scenarios of all.

Cyrus Centre offers more than just food and shelter. They provide emotional support and it is often the first time these young people experience love in their lives. Mr. Talvio answered questions and relayed the difficulty in finding a safe place for young adults when they leave the Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) funding, as cheap rent often means they will suffer some form of exploitation.

For this reason, Cyrus Centre staff mentor the young people and work with landlords to alleviate typical problems such as after-hours noise. Mr. Talvio expressed a hope that the City has a house they could utilize, as they want to move one shelter from its present location. He believes 35-50 youth are homeless in Abbotsford every night.

Moved by R. Lucy, seconded by S. Kuperis, that the presentation by Les Talvio of the Cyrus Centre delegation regarding a homeless youth at risk, be received.

HTF25-2014

CARRIED.

## 2 University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) - Geography 464 Planning Studio Students

Two groups of University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) students spoke to Power Point presentations regarding the Housing Continuum and Outreach Programs Focused on Ending Homelessness in Abbotsford, BC. They answered questions and were thanked by the Homelessness Task Force for their evidence-based presentations.

The Housing Continuum policy brief identified various stages from homeless camping to permanent independent housing. Their information was deducted through a review of the broader literature they researched, including various government and municipal reports and academic journal articles examining numerous case studies and best practices.

The students concluded that housing continuum in Abbotsford is very complex, with each stage having its own challenges and difficulties. They observed that city camping and Dignity Village style encampments are effective in providing short-term shelter but do not provide a sustainable solution to homelessness. Evidence shows that property values are not affected when supportive housing is introduced to a neighbourhood. The students felt it is essential that the City communicate this research to concerned citizens, as education will help alleviate the worries of citizens and business owners in areas of proposed supportive housing developments. Overall, early stages in the housing continuum are largely ineffective. Research shows that Housing First (HF) models are effective in reducing homelessness. The students outlined several essential components, each of which would help implement a HF program in Abbotsford. The students believe the housing continuum in Abbotsford is not an effective way to address homelessness and that it is time to take a different approach and end homelessness by providing homes.

The second group outlined recommendations in their policy brief which covered three main focuses regarding outreach programs: mental health; unemployment; and food security.

After extensive research into the Memphis Model, students recommended an increased presence of mental health police in Abbotsford. Another recommendation was the "Cool Aid" model adopted by the city of Victoria, explaining the compelling elements of this model, were its team based approach and strong supportive housing component.

The students referenced Street Health as a model adopted by Toronto that provides identification assistance among other services; as some are hampered by the need for identification in order to gain employment. Another recommendation made, regarding unemployment is for the creation of work programs, such as the Just Work program in Vancouver.

Lastly, the students addressed food security. Outlined in their brief is a recommendation regarding a piece of land put forth by a resident of Abbotsford. Their plan is based on the use of this land in cultivating it for Abbotsford's homeless, ensuring organic food security with potential therapeutic benefits; such as skills training and those associated with animal husbandry, as animals are non-judgmental and affirming.

In responding to questions and comments, students felt that educating the general public is the best antidote to NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard) when it came to projects like the proposed twenty-bed Abbotsford Community Services low barrier, supportive housing facility. Councillor Ross felt NIMBYism is a derogatory term that is dismissive of concerns.

The students agreed to make electronic copies of their presentations available to the Task Force.

Moved by R. Lucy, seconded by S. Kuperis, that the delegation of University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) - Geography 464 Planning Studio Students, regarding the Housing Continuum and Outreach Programs Focused on Ending Homelessness in Abbotsford, BC, be received.

HTF26-2014

CARRIED.

## 5. REPORTS

### 5.1 Process and Decisions/Council Report – Jake Rudolph

The Deputy City Manager, J. Rudolph asked the Task Force for their feedback on the process so far and advised that the target date to have a final report to Council is September 15, 2014. He suggested members give some thought to how they are going to collate information received in meetings and from the Working Groups and make recommendations to Council. He acknowledged that C. Enns had some thoughts regarding creating a vision and an action plan.

In response, C. Enns spoke to a Power Point presentation made to Council by way of update on the Task Force. She reminded members their role is advisory in nature, and to prepare a homelessness action plan by the middle of September. In collaboration with the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) and the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), we are working on a gap analysis and a service analysis.



Ms. Enns advised we still have few more meetings of consultation, including a dinner with the homeless in Jubilee Park and a presentation by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Contact Shayne Williams, Executive Director with KEYS Housing and Health Solutions.

C. Enns emphasized that we need a "made in Abbotsford response". In referencing the need for an outline of key policy areas and to begin filling in the pieces, she stated that she will organize all of the recommendations from the Working Groups and the Task Force, in order to present them at the July 24<sup>th</sup> meeting. She offered the Vancouver Action Plan layout as an example of what could be done. Ms. Enns stated that a goal is necessary to inform the key policy areas.

Ms. Enns requested that Working Group member complete the following statement: "Abbotsford's Goal is to \_\_\_\_\_ Homelessness" and to consider if there is a time frame by which this goal should be completed. She announced an opportunity exists for Federal funding.

R. Lucy also believed that the focus of the action plan should be specific, measurable and actionable, and ultimately delineate who is going to do what and how it will be funded. S. Kuperis liked action plan examples with short, medium and long term goals and suggested this be included in the Abbotsford action plan.

J. Rudolph referenced Council Report COR59-2014; regarding a Letter of Support being sent to Terry Lake, the Minister of Health regarding an Assertive Community Treatment Team (ACT) in Abbotsford; and including interim recommendations made by both Working Groups, and advised that Council endorsed the letter being sent.

## .2 Outreach, Drop-in and Case Management Working Group Report

None.

## .3 Housing Continuum Working Group Report

S. Kuperis provided a verbal report on the distributed June 17, 2014 Housing Continuum Working Group meeting minutes, making reference to an amendment before approval.

Moved by R. Seimens, seconded by K. Matty, that the Housing Continuum Working Group report, be received as amended.

HIF27-2014

CARRIED.

## .4 Housing First - Community Agencies and Procedures Mapping – Cherie Enns and Alison Martens

The Continuous Improvement Coordinator for the City, A. Martens distributed a graph document showing the extreme difficulty experienced by those who apply for income assistance. Members discussed this and made suggestions. J. Wegenast advised that a worker has been assisting

the 5 and 2 Ministry clients. D. Lowell advised that the Salvation Army has an onsite laptop computer and that a representative from the BC Government attends on site to process applications. One of the biggest barriers for applicants is not having an address and that the Salvation Army can provide one in the short term.

Moved by J. Burkinshaw, seconded by M. Welte, that the Process and Decisions/Council Report; the Housing Continuum Working Group Report; and, the Housing First - Community Agencies and Procedures Mapping reports, be received.

HTF28-2014

CARRIED.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

- .1 Email from Judy Graves (regarding Jetson Green Canada's First Container Housing Development Built in Vancouver)

Moved by K. Macdonald, seconded by M. Welte, that the email from Judy Graves (regarding Jetson Green Canada's First Container Housing Development Built in Vancouver) correspondence, be received.

HTF29-2014

CARRIED.

7. MEDIA

- .1 Chronic Homelessness in Abbotsford Could End in Two Years – June 8, 2014 Abbotsford News
- .2 Homeless Transitional Housing Project Proposal Presented to Task Force – June 8, 2014 Abbotsford News

Moved by J. Burkinshaw seconded by K. Macdonald that the media distributed, be received.

HTF30-2014

CARRIED.

8. NEW BUSINESS

1. Homelessness Advocate Request for Hire

C. Enns advised that Federal funding could assist with the Homelessness Advocate and that a two page proposal is required to start the process.

S. Kuperis will try to arrange a conference call with Tim Richter President & CEO, the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness and Diane M. Randell; Manager, Community & Social Development Group; City of Lethbridge, Alberta's Five Year Plan to End Homelessness.

9. ADJOURNMENT

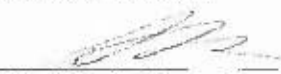
Moved by K. Matty that the June 26, 2014, Homelessness Task Force meeting be adjourned (6:42 p.m.)


HTF31-2014

CARRIED.

The next meeting of the Homelessness Task Force is scheduled for Thursday, July 24, 2014, at 4:00 pm in Room 235 (note room change). **Please note that the Jubilee Park Dinner was postponed until August 6, 2014.**

Certified Correct:

  
Co-Chair, Councillor Ross

  
Recording Secretary, L. Ganske