

Minutes of the Abbotsford Homelessness Task Force meeting held Thursday June 5, 2014, at 4:00pm in the Room 530 of Abbotsford City Hall

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Task Force Members Present: Councillor Ross – Co-Chair, Councillor Smith – Co-Chair, J. Burkinshaw, S. Kuperis, L. Loh, K. Matty, K. Macdonald, J. Njogu, R. Seimens, and M. Wette

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

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

Facilitator: C. Enns – Social Planning Consultant

Public Present: 32 +/-

1. CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Councillor Smith, called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

2. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by K. Matty, seconded by P. Ross, that the minutes of the May 15, 2014, Homelessness Task Force meeting be adopted.

HTF14-2014

CARRIED.

3. BUSINESS OUT OF MINUTES

None.

4. DELEGATION

1 Paul MacLeod – Abbotsford Dignitarian Society

P. MacLeod of the Abbotsford Dignitarian Society, introduced his delegation, spoke to a Power Point presentation and responded to questions regarding a proposed village at 33725 Valley Road, similar to the Portland Dignity Village model.

The pilot project will have:

- Ten 10x12 portable units made from recycled material (fireproof as much as possible)
- Residents share in unit construction, fostering ownership
- Walking paths, bathroom, laundry, shared shed/office, a caretaker and controlled access
- Units will have baseboard heaters, beds and desks
- Water, sewer, internet, cell phone and tv service access

- Police, Fire and City staff input into operation, siting of buildings and requirements
- A strata council with 10 hours a week volunteer requirement (security, weeding, etc.)
- Rental agreements with eviction for breach of contract
- \$375 rental fee for each resident will cover cost (though any City of Abbotsford, BC Housing or Fraser Health assistance will be welcomed)

The site:

- Is 1.2 miles from downtown/services and is easily walkable or has 20 minute bus service nearby
- Will be supported by volunteers and church groups
- Rules will be in place regarding no violence, theft or (open) drugs
- Records will be kept to ensure offenders are not allowed re-entry
- Initial budget is \$112,000 (which they are confident they can raise)
- Follows other similar models throughout the United States
- Has been nicknamed Abby Digs
- Will support micro-businesses
- Will offer support and employment opportunities

Discussion ensued regarding drainage, services, bylaw compliance, site safety and an exit strategy if unsuccessful. Chief Constable, B. Rich felt an onsite caretaker and trained security staff would go a long way in providing site safety. He recommended the operators enter into a "Good Neighbour" agreement with the City.

Further concerns were expressed over mental health and substance abuse, length of stay, and contaminants from the previous dumpsite at the location. Councillor Ross suggested soil testing to ensure health risks are addressed.

The City Manager, George Murray suggested proponents meet with staff in a pre-application session: to include Police, Bylaw, Fire, and Planning staff, in order to flesh out all potential issues, to inform the applicants of requirements to mitigate them, to determine if the proposal fits Temporary Use Permit criteria and meets all legislated requirements.

Mr. MacLeod emphasized that time is of the essence and the delegation is looking for every opportunity to cut red tape, in order to have their first residents housed by the time snow flies.

Moved by M. Welte, seconded by P. Ross, that the Power Point presentation by Paul MacLeod of the Abbotsford Dignitarian Society delegation, regarding a Portland Dignity Village model, be received.

HTF15-2014

CARRIED.

Councillor Braun distributed copies of a book entitled "Deepening Community" by Paul Born to members of the Task Force. He felt it would assist in addressing the homeless concerns in Abbotsford.

.2 Tim Richter - Housing First and Plans to End Homelessness (www.caeh.ca)

Tim Richter from the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH), spoke to a Power Point presentation entitled "Abbotsford's 5 Year Plan to End Homelessness", and distributed a booklet entitled, "A Plan Not a Dream". He referred members to the CAEH website for these and other resource materials.

Mr. Richter advised that homelessness costs the Canadian economy \$7.05 billion, and that the CAEH approach makes a shift from managing homelessness to ending it. He stated that crisis responses simply do not work. He explained that, because every city is different, a customized community strategy is needed to end homelessness.

Mr. Richter encouraged the Task Force members that Abbotsford's rental market is in good shape. He felt confident that following CAEH recommendations, homelessness could be eradicated in Abbotsford within two years. While counter-intuitive, he said it is best to prioritize the chronic and most difficult to house first. He emphasized focussing on permanent solutions, not temporary ones and setting clear, measurable, aggressive targets.

Members discussed the presentation and asked questions of the presenter, including what the organizational chart of a team to address homelessness would look like. He said a lead implementer is an important position, someone who is able to stitch together a coordination of all services. In response to another question, he noted that Alberta's approach operates outside of the existing health system, because of the difficulty in obtaining assistance for some clients who don't meet their criteria. He noted that sometimes Canada and the United States get locked by systems when trying to address homelessness.

Mr. Richter offered to support Abbotsford in implementing CAEH recommendations, including assisting with obtaining Federal funding. He will put C. Enns in touch with the correct contacts.

Moved by Councillor Ross, seconded by J. Burkinshaw, that the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness delegation of Tim Richter, be received.

HTF16-2014

CARRIED.

.3 Diane M. Randell; Manager, Community & Social Development Group; City of Lethbridge, Alberta's Five Year Plan to End Homelessness

Diane M. Randell, Manager for the City of Lethbridge Community & Social Development Group, spoke to a Power Point entitled "Until Everyone Has a Home". She relayed how the City of Lethbridge all but eliminated homelessness, by partnering with six other communities and creating a holistic approach to homelessness. She explained how important governance and coordination of services are, as well as preparing for new releases from: prisons, hospitals, and foster care, by having a housing plan in place beforehand.

Ms. Randell said each community is unique and a cookie cutter approach does not work. She shared what Lethbridge has learned over twelve years, regarding what works and advised that they have moved from a compliance-based approach to being more flexible, given the

limitations of the homeless. They now focus on prevention, rapid re-housing, and client-centered support services.

Ms. Randell referenced the cost savings they have realized; in the reduction of ancillary services (i.e. police and fire) and in the improved health status of clients. She noted that the ability of Lethbridge to lobby for funding was increased by having seven communities coalesce.

Ms. Randell's department oversees Community and Social Development policy. In response to questions, she advised that she is the Coordinator in Lethbridge, with twenty-eight contracted administrators. They do not rely on volunteers. Their advisory committee, chaired by a strong community leader, has one hundred participants and several sub-committees. She stressed the importance of building relationships with all service providers and providing a "warm" transition for the homeless (i.e. by accompanying them to first time appointments) who are often discouraged from engaging services due to the difficulty in accessing them. Lethbridge has an annual trade fair with all service providers (offering doctors on site, foot care, hair-cuts, etc.), because having the poor plugged in to services prevents homelessness.

Ms. Randell summarized by underscoring having a plan, having targets and staying focussed ("just stick to your knitting"). She admonished, "Keep momentum and celebrate successes". She offered to assist Abbotsford with training modules or online communiques.

Moved by L. Loh, seconded by J. Burkinshaw, that the the City of Lethbridge delegation of Manager, Diane M. Randell, regarding Alberta's Five Year Plan to End Homelessness, be received.

HTF17-2014

CARRIED.

4 Resident - Plan to Fit the Needs of the Homeless, Residents, Council and Non-profit Organizations in Abbotsford

A long-term resident of Gladys Avenue, who with her granddaughter, lives across from the Salvation Army facility, spoke regarding the topic she entitled, "Who Matters?" She contended that "we all matter: the homeless, the taxpayers, and the residents of Abbotsford". She implored the Task Force and City leaders to resolve the unbearable Gladys Avenue homeless camp issues impacting her neighbourhood.

The resident relayed a long list of unsettling events, and she played a recording of a police incident involving gunfire. She stated that two hundred police visits have been made to her neighbourhood since she moved in. She gave several reasons why she does not want to leave her long-term home.

The resident felt the root cause of the camps was the feeding of the homeless by the Salvation Army. She stated that they "follow the food source" and that moving it, would cause them to relocate. She noted that the recent "clean-up" of the homeless camp simply caused the dwellers to move up the street, with no abatement to the impact on her and her neighbours, because they remained in proximity of the food. The woman admonished the Task Force and community leaders present in the meeting to get together and solve the problem.

Moved by K Matty, seconded by Councillor Ross, that the delegation of Peggy Allan, regarding the homeless camps along Gladys Avenue and their impact on the neighbourhood, be received.

HTF18-2014

CARRIED.

## 5. REPORTS

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

Councillor Ross provided a verbal report on the May 27, 2014 Outreach, Drop-in and Case Management Working Group meeting and distributed the minutes. L. Loh advised that he was in attendance at the meeting and not Marcus Lem, but had not been noted in the minutes.

Three recommendations came out of the meeting:

- 1) That an Assertive Treatment Team (ACT) be implemented in Abbotsford;
- 2) That a "One Stop Shop" or "Connect Centre" be created in an appropriate area of Abbotsford; and,
- 3) That a position of a Homeless Advocate be created in the City of Abbotsford.

Members discussed the findings of the working group and in response to questions, the Lethbridge delegate confirmed that they have a Homeless advocate and six ACT teams. It was recommended that the Homeless Advocate have a degree in Human Geography.

Greg Glaim of Harvest Discovery Homes exclaimed that he had to leave the meeting and was hoping to get some help opening a recovery home in Abbotsford, as he has operated a twenty-bed facility in Chilliwack and a ten-bed facility in Mission for a number of years. He distributed brochures to the Task Force. It was suggested that he attend the Housing Continuum Working Group meetings to explain himself further.

Councillor Ross announced that no subsequent Outreach, Drop-in and Case Management Working Group meeting is scheduled at this time.

Moved by R. van Wyk, seconded by J. Burkinshaw, that the Outreach, Drop-in and Case Management Working Group report, be received.

HTF19-2014

CARRIED.

### .2 Housing Continuum Working Group Report

S. Kuperis provided a verbal report on the distributed May 27, 2014 Housing Continuum Working Group meeting and distributed the minutes. He noted that a review of the recovery home policy is being conducted by the working group. Also, there needs to be a complete listing of all facilities, in order to identify gaps in service. Councillor Smith advised that staff can assist with this. A. Stewart advised that the Fraser Valley Regional District has contracted the

Mennonite Central Committee to create an Inventory of Social Housing. C. Enns advised that she would be meeting with A. Stewart and R. van Wyk to discuss this.

Mr. Kuperis advised that a letter will be drafted under the Mayor's signature to be sent to the Minister of Health, regarding the need for an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team in Abbotsford. Also, that Fraser Health has identified the need for a Community Residential Mental Health Licensed Facility in Abbotsford.

J. Burkinshaw will approach the Abbotsford Christian Leadership Network (ACLN) sometime in June regarding support for more church supported boarding homes like "Tony's Place". The business plan for this, and the prospect of obtaining BC Housing funding, will be discussed at the next Housing Continuum Working Group meeting.

Members discussed sharing of information, funding, and the striking of an additional working group and/or having City staff look at the Dignity Village model. J. Rudolph advised that staff will look at the Engineering, Policing, Fire, flooding, and safety issues for the proposed village, but that currently, no zone exists for it.

Mr. Kuperis advised that the next meeting of the Housing Continuum Working Group will take place on Tuesday, June 17, 2014 from 9:30 to 11:00am in the Gateway Complex – Building #3 402-2031 McCallum Road, Matsqui Developments, boardroom.

Moved by K. Matty, seconded by J. Burkinshaw, that the  
Housing Continuum Working Group report, be received.

HTF20-2014

CARRIED.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

- .1 Mental Health Substance Use Community Fact Sheet
- .2 Library Tour Rationale

Moved by L. Loh, seconded by K. Matty, that the Mental  
Health Substance Use Community Fact Sheet and Library  
Tour Rationale correspondence, be received.

HTF21-2014

CARRIED.

7. MEDIA

- .1 May 7, 2014 Abbotsford News Article regarding the May 6, 2014 Homelessness Task Force meeting
- .2 May 10, 2014 Abbotsford News Article regarding the clean-up of homeless camps along Gladys Avenue

Moved by M. Welte seconded by S. Kuperis that the media distributed, be received.

HTF22-2014

CARRIED.

8. NEW BUSINESS

.1 July 24, 2014 Jubilee Park Meeting Sign-up Sheet

C. Enns announced that the Task Force will be serving a meal at the July 24, 2014 meeting at Jubilee Park. She asked members to sign up for their preference of food to bring.

.2 City Page Ad for the Homelessness Task Force

C. Enns announced the Task Force has been included in the City Page advertisement in the Abbotsford News and that it features a link to the Task Force website, where members of the public can register to appear as a delegation or email the Task Force.

.3 Homelessness Action Plan Examples for Discussion at next meeting

C. Enns circulated examples of Homelessness Action Plans from various communities for review and discussion at the June 26, 2014 meeting.

.4 Homelessness Task Force Tour Schedule

C. Enns requested that members advise her or L. Ganske if they plan on attending the Raven's Moon tour on June 6, 2014.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by K. Matty that the June 5, 2014, Homelessness Task Force meeting be adjourned (8:42 p.m.)

HTF23-2014

CARRIED.

The next meeting of the Homelessness Task Force is scheduled for Thursday, June 26, 2014, at 4:00 pm in Room 235.

Certified Correct:

  
Co-Chair, Councillor Smith

  
Recording Secretary, L. Ganske

