



CITY OF VANCOUVER
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MAY 25, 2005

A Special Meeting of the Council of the City of Vancouver was held on Wednesday, May 25, 2005, at 7:30 p.m., in the Council Chamber, Third Floor, City Hall.

PRESENT: Mayor Larry Campbell
*Councillor Fred Bass
Councillor David Cadman
Councillor Jim Green
*Councillor Peter Ladner
Councillor Tim Louis
*Councillor Anne Roberts
Councillor Tim Stevenson
Councillor Sam Sullivan
Councillor Ellen Woodsworth

ABSENT: Councillor Raymond Louie (Sick Leave)

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE: Judy Rogers, City Manager

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE: Diane Clairmont, Meeting Coordinator

* Denotes absence for a portion of the meeting.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MOVED by Councillor Louis
SECONDED by Councillor Cadman

THAT this Council resolve itself into Committee of the Whole, Mayor Campbell in the Chair.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY
(Councillors Bass, Ladner and Roberts not present for the vote)

1. Revised Homeless Action Plan (File 4659)

On May 10, 2005, City Council referred the Policy Report *Revised Homeless Action Plan*, dated April 26, 2005, and proposed amendments for consideration to a Special Council meeting on May 25, 2005, and to hear delegations.

Accordingly, Council had the Report and proposed amendments before it.

Jill Davidson, Homeless Policy Coordinator, provided a brief overview of the Report ("Plan") and proposed amendments.

The following spoke in favour of the recommendations:

Jill Stainsby & Louise Gaudry, Advisory Committee on Disability Issues (brief submitted - on file)
Laura Jones, Child Welfare & Family Committee, BC Association of Social Workers
Paul Houle, Child Welfare & Family Committee, BC Association of Social Workers (brief submitted - on file)
Tracey Young, BCGEU, Local 603 (brief submitted - on file)
Bev Meslo, National Action Committee on Status of Women - BC Society
Doug Aason, Chair, Urban Core Workers Association
Kerry Jang, President, Collingwood Neighbourhood House
Jo-Anne Stephens, Coordinator, Renfrew Collingwood Homelessness Committee
Linda Mix
Jean Swanson
Mark Smith, Executive Director, The Triage Emergency Services & Care Society
Sister Elizabeth Kelliher, Franciscan Sisters Benevolent Society
Pastor Norman Oldham, River of God Fellowship & Potter's Place Mission (brief submitted - on file)
Stephen Lytton
Penny Kerrigan, Executive Director, Aboriginal Mother Centre Society
Marilyn Young
Bonnie Rice, Executive Director, Katherine Sanford Housing Society
Anton Pilipa
Kim Kerr, DERA
Buddy Lee
Muggs Sigurgeirson, Carnegie Community Centre Association
Christine Howes
Jonn O'Idym
Lucy Alderson
Perry Omeasoo, President, Vancouver Native Health
Christopher Livingstone, Executive Director, Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society
Roland Cooney
Nancy Hall
May Kossoff
Ken Frail
Leslie Stern
Patrick Stewart (brief submitted - on file)
Clemencia Gomez

Speakers' comments included:

- commended staff for report which is comprehensive and credible;

- reviewed February 8, 2005 motion passed by Advisory Committee on Disability Issues which makes specific recommendations relating to disability issues and Plan;
- recommended swift action from all levels of government;
- necessary to work with Ministry decision-makers regarding children/family development;
- reviewed statistics regarding homelessness and children; numbers are increasing;
- homeless almost always clients of public systems and assistance programs;
- foster care system must provide better discharge planning; not move children in system except back to well-supported families; large turnover of homes increases risk of children becoming homeless adults;
- extended families must be helped to provide care for children at risk;
- welfare rates, EI and income assistance levels must be increased;
- child and daycare funding must be restored;
- coordination with Ministry of Human Resources must be improved;
- youth housing/staffing must be provided in the same manner as seniors' housing;
- City's Child and Youth Advocate should assist in integrating child welfare issues into Plan;
- United Nations mandate regarding rights of children and adequate standing of living must be considered by all levels of government;
- concerns expressed relating to inadequate care for youth including limited range of residential/mental health services, lack of alternative schools space, limited drug and alcohol related services and institutionalized age discrimination;
- due to poverty/abuse/neglect/domestic violence, and other reasons, many youth are forced or choose to be on the streets where they find a sense of family;
- the younger a child becomes entrenched in a street life style, the more difficult it becomes to integrate them back into society and health risks increase;
- number of homeless women is increasing; gender specific data should be gathered;
- gap between income and affordable housing has reached crisis proportions;
- moving people inside and providing longer term stability is cost effective;
- services/housing/special needs facilities required throughout Vancouver, not just in DTES;
- Provincial and Federal governments must resume housing development;
- persons with incidents of repeat homelessness need immediate assistance;
- subsidized housing units are being lost at an alarming rate;
- do not relax 320 sq. ft. standard unit size; smaller suites are not long-term answer;
- livability is key to housing, along with affordability;
- 400 units already lost to Olympics fallout;
- by-laws/standard business license standards must be enforced (hire more inspectors);
- complete renovations to SROs with as little disruption to residents as possible;
- 450 sq. ft. should be standard for all new units of low income housing stock;
- City should encourage private sector to create more rental housing through zoning changes and preserving existing rental stock;
- City should purchase two SROs/year, not one;
- part-time workers find it increasingly difficult to find housing;
- stronger enforcement tools required for SROs;
- provide incentives to SRO owners, e.g. performance contracts;
- Council must stand up to provincial/federal governments and act immediately to take advantage of proposed federal housing funding;

- TransLink should provide transportation free of charge for homeless; cold/wet weather funded programs exist in Toronto, Winnipeg and Calgary;
- supported community forums, but suggested regular report card process and continued community involvement;
- local planning office should be initiated in the DTES asap;
- homelessness is not restricted to the DTES, but throughout Vancouver;
- working poor numbers are increasing;
- house surfing is becoming prevalent;
- communities help with lower cost stop-gap measures but there is lack of funding, resources, and time; these measures are neither solutions, nor sustainable;
- City should not be seduced by lower cost stop-gap measures; Triple A credit rating is achieved by reducing liabilities to the City and the Plan is a good step;
- 'temporary' food banks are now accepted as part of society - this is unacceptable;
- staff commended for connecting community organizations and service providers;
- public education is a major component in achieving successful implementation;
- report must specify it is meant to serve homeless and ensure their respect and dignity;
- Council should ask Ministry of Tourism to allocate portion of hotel tax to fund implementation of the Plan;
- Council should contact those responsible for Residential Tenancy Act and request that appropriate personnel be given enforcement powers;
- alleviating homelessness will lessen problems relating to sex trade and sanitation;
- Council should build city-wide coalition and contact other organizations, including Federal and Provincial bodies and the media, to emphasize need for immediate implementation to fix broken system;
- report is so broad that resources might be spread too thin to implement properly;
- need targeted street outreach to identify population and work to connect them to specifically designed housing;
- purposeful interventions required; create destinations to continue stabilization;
- Council should proclaim "Homelessness Week" (3rd week of November); suggested events include free meals (nominal fee for those able to pay) and inter-agency forum; all Vancouver should be encouraged to participate;
- report should be broken up to determine short and long-term realistic possibilities;
- Vancouver can showcase ability to work together and take leadership role;
- report does not include aboriginal concerns and should address the following:
 - traditional values;
 - why so many aboriginal children live in 3rd world conditions;
 - aboriginal communities suffer the poorest social and health status;
 - research and statistics relating to aboriginal homeless women;
 - services/training required to break the cycle of poverty;
 - designated shelters for aboriginal homeless and mentally ill;
 - staff should meet with aboriginal community; representation is insufficient;
- report should address effects of Provincial budget cuts on women, particularly seniors;
- Council to urge the Province to make supported housing for mentally ill a priority throughout British Columbia, so individuals can remain in their own communities;
- assistance eligibility requires degree of literacy/computer/orientation; training required;
- transportation, phone/computer access and training are critical to job searches;
- detox and recovery programs should be available on demand to all people;

- housing is a form of treatment; treatment should be implemented assertively - take it to those who need it;
- police require training relating to psychotic episodes;
- environmental health concerns affect homeless;
- mature women in particular are missed in homelessness count (hidden homeless);
- Architectural Institute of BC should be a partner in this initiative;
- some seniors, specifically women, fear being in the same shelters as youth; senior women require designated transitional housing.

The following spoke in opposition to the recommendations:

Anton Pilipa
Kim Kerr, DERA

Speakers' comments included:

- report back in 2 years will show that homelessness will have increased;
- report does not indicate action will take place, it is a policy report only;
- City should not rely on other levels of government, but fund services directly;
- City should not create homelessness by closing down problem buildings and evicting residents who require immediate housing relocation assistance;
- hotels being closed for conversion/RAP grants will have rooms available for \$450/month which is not affordable to current tenants who have \$325 for rent, resulting in homelessness; owners who are willing should be allowed to comply with by-laws, repaint, and rent at affordable rates; this process is planned gentrification
- Vancouver Police Department plays a role in creating homelessness.

Ms. Davidson advised staff is reviewing possible incentives and ways to work with hotels to encourage better management; performance contracts are being considered in this process. She further advised the Province would be engaged in the discussion.

MOVED by Councillor SULLIVAN

THAT the discussion and decision on Policy Report *Revised Homeless Action Plan*, dated April 26, 2005, be postponed to the Regular Council meeting on Tuesday, June 14, 2005.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY
(Councillor Roberts not present for the vote)

RISE FROM COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MOVED by Councillor Cadman

THAT the Committee of the Whole rise and report.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY
(Councillor Roberts not present for the vote)

ADOPT REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MOVED by Councillor Louis
SECONDED by Councillor Sullivan

THAT the report of the Committee of the Whole be adopted.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY
(Councillor Roberts not present for the vote)

The Special Council adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

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