

MINUTES
SOCIAL PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 2008-JAN-09, BOARD ROOM, CITY HALL

Present: Diane Brennan, Chair
Elizabeth Forrester
Diana Johnstone
Ralph Meyerhoff
Bev Barton
Lynne Fraser
Zeni Maartman
Kathy Torhjelm

Staff: John Horn, Social Planner
Cindy Hall, Recording Secretary

Regrets: Val Alcock-Carter
Adam Evans
Andrea Bonkowski

Others: Leonard Krog, MLA

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:50 p.m. Chair Brennan introduced Leonard Krog, MLA and welcomed him to the meeting as an observer.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOVED by K. Torhjelm, SECONDED by Z. Maartman that the agenda be approved with the following addition:

- Safe Needle Disposal Boxes - J. Horn
- CARRIED.

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED by R. Meyerhoff, SECONDED by L. Fraser that the Minutes from 2007-Dec-12 be adopted. CARRIED.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

a) D. Brennan read out a letter dated 2007-Dec-14 from Darcy Ross tendering her resignation from SPAC.

MOVED by E. Forrester, SECONDED BY B. Barton that D. Ross' letter of resignation be accepted with regret. CARRIED.

D. Brennan will send a letter of thanks to Darcy on behalf of SPAC.

An ad will be placed in the Jan. 24th and 26th 'City Page' requesting applications to fill the vacancy.

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES / INFORMATION ITEMS / NEW BUSINESS

a) Update on SAFER Committee Initiatives, and CitySpaces Consultation - J. Horn advised that the SAFER Committee met with representatives from CitySpaces Consulting Ltd. today regarding the Harm Reduction and Housing Action Plan project. The consultants plan to consult with Downtown businesses and merchants, service providers, resident associations, and homeless people early in the process. A public form will be held at a later time. John noted that CitySpaces are the consultants who recently provided the City of Victoria with a report which will assist with their problems of drug use and homelessness. He will keep SPAC informed on the project.

b) Reports from Committee Reps.

Grants Advisory Committee - Z. Maartman advised that the Committee would not be meeting until March, so had nothing new to report.

Plan Nanaimo Advisory Committee - R. Meyerhoff noted his concerns about the application that the City has received from Cable Bay to amend the Official Community Plan. PNAC discussed the application at length, then decided to forward it to Council for consideration. Because of his strong opposition to the Urban Containment Boundary being amended, Ralph felt that the application should not even have been considered. He also stated that he was concerned because his perception is that senior City staff and Council appear to support the application.

The Committee then had considerable discussion on this issue. Some comments were:

- This is not a way to address the social issues in our community.
- The recommendation made by PNAC was to forward the application to Council for their consideration; it was not an endorsement by PNAC.
- Now that Council has directed the preparation of an OCP amendment bylaw, it will provide the public the opportunity to comment on the proposal. There will also be other opportunities for people to speak against the proposal during the various application stages.
- People should be urged to not support the proposal because it is not in the best interest of the community.
- If the UCB is moved to allow the development, provision of sewer and water would be paid by the developer. The alternative to that is having 5-acre lots, which are not sustainable or economically sound.
- Council has not received the Downtown Nanaimo Partnership's official comments on the proposal yet, but know that they want densification Downtown and not out at Cable Bay.
- The SAFER Committee has not discussed the proposal yet.
- If you increase the density Downtown, the safer it will become.

MOVED by Z. Maartman, SECONDED by K. Torhjelm that further discussion of the Cable Bay application be put on the next SPAC agenda. CARRIED.

J. Horn will invite Andrew Tucker, Director of Planning & Development to the next SPAC meeting to provide information regarding the application. He will also be asked to bring the draft social policy being considered for the proposed new Official Community Plan.

Secondary Suite Task Force - L. Fraser advised that the Task Force will be reconvened to consider the issue of pre-standing garages that became suites

c) Council Monitoring - K. Torhjelm reported the following from the Dec. 17th Council meeting:

- RDN director Joe Burnett made a presentation on the Cable Bay proposal. He was very opposed to the proposed densification as it would be out of character in that rural area. He was also worried about the increase in traffic that will result.
- The Social Development Grant recommendations were endorsed.
- The harm reduction strategy that VIHA is putting forward was discussed. Members of the public present at the meeting stressed the need for public consultation on this topic.
- Designating an area of the Jingle Pot Neighbourhood as Urban Reserve was discussed. This direction requires staff to prepare policies for an Urban Reserve designation to be included in the Draft Official Community Plan. The intent for the Urban Reserve is to hold the area from urban development until an Area Plan is prepared.

R. Meyerhoff noted that PNAC recommended no change to the UCB or designation be made to the Jingle Pot Neighbourhood. Council however directed staff to prepare a bylaw for introduction to move the Urban Containment Boundary, and designate the area as an urban reserve.

MOVED by Z. Maartman, SECONDED by D. Johnstone that the reports from the Committee reps. as well as the Council monitoring report be received. CARRIED.

- d) Safe Needle Disposal Boxes - J. Horn advised that he recently met with Fire Chief Ron Lambert and Gord Cote of the Needle Exchange about the possible use of needle disposal boxes in Nanaimo in light of the fact that the needle exchange is not open all day. A draft program was prepared which proposes the fire department, needle exchange, City Parks Dept., and VIHA all have roles in the operation of the program. The SAFER Committee has requested more investigation on roles, costs, and communication aspects of the program prior to it being presented to City Council. B. Barton noted that it is also important to have indicators to measure the program's success, and a clear idea of how it could be sustained.

D. Johnstone enquired whether there was any way to offer free Hep.C vaccinations. It was noted that a process of giving vaccinations already exists out of VIHA, but not methods of payment. Diana suggested that SPAC consider implementing a grant to assist with the costs of vaccinations. J. Horn will look into this with VIHA, and will report back at the next meeting.

MOVED by Z. Maartman, SECONDED by B. Barton to accept the report from J. Horn. CARRIED.

6. STRATEGIC PLANNING

- a) Social Development Strategy -

MOVED by K. Torhjem, SECONDED by L. Fraser that Z. Maartman, B. Barton and a member of the SDS Steering Committee assist J. Horn in preparing a presentation to Council for the Feb. 11th meeting recommending that Council formally adopt the Strategy. CARRIED.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

- a) Informal Discussion with L. Krog, MLA:

- He senses that the majority of the public are "on board" with social issues being tackled in a serious way, but the politicians need to be convinced of that.
- He is very optimistic though because the voters understand, and the more people talk about what is required, there is hope of political change occurring around it.
- Affordable housing needs to be provided before all of the social issues can be addressed. If you provide affordable housing, "everything else flows".
- When asked about the public's perception of people who choose to use drugs, Mr. Krog stated that the public appears to understand that services need to be readily available for those people if they do decide to quit. D. Brennan noted that the public's acceptance of safe injection sites in Vancouver also shows this.
- Mr. Krog added that even if the public are not overly sympathetic, they know it is cheaper to provide those services compared to what the health care costs would be without them.
- When asked if the government is empowered and whether they are providing sufficient funding to deal with the problems, Mr. Krog stated "absolutely not".

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 2008-Feb-13.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

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