

Housing Working Group Meeting Notes

March 15th, 2022

Virtual WebEx Meeting

10:00AM – 12:00PM

Those in Attendance: Lance Dingman, Tom Manzuk, Paula Kilburn, James Kemp, Jayne Cardno

Also in Attendance: Jessica Bowen

Those Absent: Robert Semkow, Sophie Geffros

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Approval of March 15th Agenda: Agenda was approved with the removal of Jen Chivers as a presenter. She sent her regrets and will attend next month.

3. Approval of February 15th Meeting Notes: Meeting Notes were approved.

4. Housing and Homelessness Delegation Update: Chair provided an update of the delegation at the beginning of the month. The presentation seemed to go well, but there is no clear direction for working closer to this committee. They don't use working groups and seem to only receive presentations without acting on them.

5. Rising Stars Program with Lance Dingman: Lance explained some of the Rising Stars Program and that it is supposed to be a supportive form of housing for those that need it. Lance mentioned that he needs help in the program.

6. Review of Jayne's Letter Regarding Homelessness and Encampments: We read through the letter that Jayne wrote regarding homelessness and encampments. It is a very thorough and comprehensive letter regarding the costs and effects of some of Council's decisions on persons with disabilities and was well received. We discussed combining our efforts with other committees. While we will continue to discuss this issue, we feel the letter is a good first step. It should be on the agenda next month. Paula suggested reaching out to LGBTQ+.

7. Other Business: Paula informed us that she would be dropping out of Housing. Chair asked that she still be considered an honorary member as her experience would be required when it comes time to review accessibility of forms and accessibility of web sites. We also discussed CityHousing and Indwell and new constructions. CityHousing is trading up even on new buildings and doesn't seem to be gaining any units.

LRT affordable accessible housing construction. We also discussed combining forces with other like-minded groups.

8. Adjournment.

ACPD letter re Homeless Encampments

The Cities Advisory Committee for Person's with Disabilities with the mission to raise awareness of the impacts of disabilities, and to identify issues and make recommendations, preventing and eliminating barriers for persons living with disabilities would like to address the Homeless Encampments issue. The committee has learned of a number of trends that have exasperated the housing crisis especially for those with disabilities which can lead to homelessness.

The ACPD Committee also recognizes the difficulties surrounding and resolving homelessness and encampments. We encourage consideration be given to the long-term elimination of homelessness as well as the consequences of any short-term interventions. Solutions should consider multiple causes, including city policies and growing inequality and thereby work to end homelessness and the use of shelters for the long-term.

Multiple issues compound the problem of homelessness. The original crisis (losing a home) is repeated by dismantling encampments and the repeated trauma of numerous losses can spiral into unexpected and unintended consequences that damage mental health and interactions with law enforcement. As a result the homeless require greater health care, potential criminal charges and penalties and related costs, grow. Individuals impacted will take longer to recover and to meaningfully participate in society.

Because policy and practice were found to be central to the court determination regarding encampments the Municipality and Province must both re-evaluate related practices that unexpectedly can grow homelessness. Examples sit with the social assistance programs. Evidence, even when constrained by legal veracity, remains abundant that dismantling camps and the use of crowded shelters potentially harm and provide no form of long-term, safe solution. Related healthcare and emergency service costs continue to grow. Thus the ACPD subcommittee would like to raise concerns related to escalating costs of related disabilities and barriers to social inclusion.

- Stable housing is a Social Determinant of Health (SdoH) and people cannot lead productive lives, contributing to

the economy and maintaining family (are marginalized) when not properly housed.

- evidence indicates that the homeless experience significant health consequences, that exacerbate disabilities and exacerbate illness and chronic disease (SDoH) that prolong incapacity and can shorten their lives.

- Once an individual declines to homelessness their needs become more complex with more difficulty to connect to services (no phone) such as housing that stabilizes these individuals for employment.

- They lose the skills and abilities to manage their daily lives and are more likely to be given a mental health diagnosis.

- The lose the ability to advocate for themselves and their needs.

- Illnesses such as depression (often unrecognized) leading to disability are tied to the lost of work, home, family or an accident) and initial problems multiple and accumulate.

- Shelters are not suitable for those with any form of disability – they exacerbate health concerns such as mental health, addiction and depression and increase the potential for harm, acting out and desperate actions. Often nearby facilities and businesses have has to increase

security while events requiring emergency response continue to grow as displaced persons seek shelter and assistance.

-Dismantling encampments without anything better is replicating and repeating the trauma of previous losses and does little to change their circumstances.

Constructive action for long-term resolution will undoubtedly be less costly and damaging. The ACPD fully supports action that includes working with existing groups that have a front-line knowledge of the problems.

Inequality and related policy and practice are implicated in growing and sustaining homelessness and must be acknowledged and addressed.

* SDoH Social Determinants of Health