



MAP HOUSING WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES

Thursday April 23, 2020 - 1:00 pm

VIRTUAL MEETING

PRESENT:

James Grunau, Doug Peat, Barry Growe (Journey Home Community)

Derek Chu, Ryan Reid (Kinbrace)

Richard Belcham, Tammy Johnson, Alissa Cook (inasmuch)

Jenny Lam (Options)

Meaad Alharbi (SOS / ISS of BC)

Alexandra Dawley (MOSAIC)

Ann Barnard Ball (New Hope CS)

Dustin Lupick (HSABC)

Scott Small (Catholic Charities Men's Hostel)

Joni Rose (MJEDC)

Jenny Moss (MAP)

Regrets: Nicole Stinson (BC Housing), Julia Wu (bc211), Moe Zaqout (MAP)

Co-Chair: James Grunau

- James welcomed everyone - Introductions
- Outline of Agenda – Approved
- Other agenda items to consider:
 - Dustin Lupick (HSABC) / Scott Small (CCMH) - Intake at Shelters during COVID-19**
New intake at shelters is now governed by each health authority (attached DATED SAMPLE VCH protocols) and each shelter may be a little different depending on circumstances.
Many shelters appear unavailable on bc211 – and the rules are being updated about twice a week.

Constantly shifting but there is an increasing problem with lack space and PPE, especially for the smaller shelters who try to welcome as many as possible, but not always possible. It has also been increasingly difficult to assist claimants during COVID-19 and there is more discussion of how to tailor services to particular needs as well as renewed discussion about standardization.

Questions:

- Is there any sense how many claimants are in the shelter system?
Response: No, the count was before COVID-19 and at this time we don't know. Scott has 3 claimants currently.
Re: COVID-19 Because everyone is short-staffed tracking is not easy, though the shelters are being recognized as having a big role in protection.
- Will there be more testing in the shelters?
Response: Some may have heard of the testing in Boston or LA where many asymptomatic people have been identified. This is not happening here – the health authorities are still focused on cluster-testing, though the shelters would really welcome more testing.
- How big is your shelter? (to Scott / CCMH)
Response: We can house 120 but we are reduced to 75 because of the pandemic. We could increase to 85 if needed. There is slow turnover at all shelters until they receive more assistance and extended support.
- Do you get families?
Response: No – we send them to Journey Home or other transition houses for families, and we avoid taking in married men where possible.
- Did you track claimants in your shelter before COVID-19? YES
Richard will get in touch as Inasmuch want to assist single male claimants. Scott will put him in touch with Margaret Pintou.(sp?)
- Alexandra mentioned that MOSAIC can help with providing settlement support to any claimants in Scott's shelter via phone and webinar.
- Scott also mentioned they have some extra supplies they may be able to share – Jenny connected Scott with Bayron Figueroa at Purpose who is looking for hand sanitizer. Scott received a donation from a brewery who has converted their system to making hand sanitizer.

Scott is also committed to helping more claimants in shelters if he can.

Dustin (HSABC) added that some of the Emergency Shelters that close in May will be kept open to assist with social distancing during the pandemic.

ITEM 2. The impact of COVID-19 on refugee claimant housing:

- the loss of new arrivals and future impact on our sector; refugee claimants currently in the shelter system; refugee claimants and loss of housing; is the referral system continuing to function?

Richard (Inasmuch) referrals have slowed. One issue is income assistance and the need for documentation.

Chair's question: Have agencies got clients who have lost income (from jobs) and may lose housing?

Alexandra (MOSAIC): Yes, though no-one has lost housing yet.

Dustin (HSABC): couch-surfing is no longer safe – what’s happening to these folks?

Joni (MJEDC) is it pressure from new claimants?

Response: no, it’s the social distancing requirements that make life perilous for claimants living in difficult circumstances.

Added Alexandra: and international students may also make a claim and add to the pressure too.

Mead (SOS): have seen clients who have lost their jobs and have helped them apply for emergency benefits. Also have seen visitors to Canada, international students who are beginning to make claims but none of them needed housing.

But big issue for SOS is long term housing – now doing lease contracts online and SOS is helping their known landlords with this.

Please refer those needing long term housing to SOS.

Question as to what’s happening for **bc211**? (Julia could not attend)

Jenny mentioned that bc211 is very busy with a COVID-19 program related to volunteers and their clients during the pandemic.

ITEM 3: Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness' response to our HWG input and planning for a future call for proposals for capital projects for the Interim Housing Assistance Program (IHAP).

Documents were attached to Agenda:

a) letter from Maia McKinley, Senior Policy Advisor, Immigration Policy and Integration Branch, Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness (attached together with response from Co-chairs HWG)

b) letter from Carling Helander, Executive Director in response, Immigration Policy and Integration Branch, Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness (attached together with most recent response from MAP HWG)

James asked committee if everyone was in agreement with co-chairs’ responses to the Ministry re: disposal of the \$4.8m.

Response: Yes, all agreed.

How will MAP HWG respond when the RFP is announced? Will this be a coordinated approach (as before with Housing referral Project) or will agencies be free to apply separately and in competition?

Richard: assuming the RFP will come from BC Housing then other agencies (beyond HWG) could compete for the funds. If we work collaboratively would that not provide our proposal more weight?

James – the proposal needs to be claimant-focused so unlikely to be another agency beyond HWG.

Question to Joni: hypothetically would the Ministry prefer a coordinated response?

Response: I can ask. Typically, the RFP will specify if only individual applications are acceptable, or if groups are permitted.

James: we would assume that the more coordinated we are the better.

Joni: There are positives and negatives. Coordination is very helpful, but it would require a lead agency.

Richard: Interested in the geographic perspective – would a coordinated response allow for housing outside Vancouver?

James: it's important we are communicating and informing rather than competing.

Who is interested in putting in a bid?

Tammy (Inasmuch) Inasmuch is very interested in providing housing for single men – would other agencies be thinking along these lines too?

James: Journey Home will definitely submit a bid

Ann (New Hope CS): we may be interested too – but we don't only serve claimants

Derek (Kinbrace): we would be interested, but not to serve a particular sub-population. Kinbrace prefers the diversity of its population.

Alexandra: MOSAIC interested, but it's too early to say more

Joni: Suggested that HWG come up with a Plan A and Plan B: a consortium approach and individual bids. Important to have this option if it's only a 4-week turnaround on the RFP.

James: we need to prepare now. Co-chairs will discuss and report back.

ITEM 4: Preparing for the upcoming appointment of co-chair leadership for the HWG

James will not be seeking re-appointment as co-chair of MAP Housing Working group (due in June) as he will have completed the 2-year rotation.

Derek is willing to continue for another year, if the working group so wishes.

Derek and James will work on a nomination/election system to appoint a new co-chair and bring it to the table in May.

Everyone thanked James profusely for his help and wisdom in guiding HWG and housing for claimants.

ADJOURNED at 2:05 pm - next meeting will be May 28, presumably also via Zoom