

MAP HOUSING WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES

Thursday January 23, 2020 - 1:00 pm at MOSAIC: 5575 Boundary Road, Vancouver

PRESENT:

Derek Chu, Ryan Reid (Kinbrace)

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

Richard Belcham, Peter Prediger, Alissa Cook (inasmuch)

Khim Tan (Options)

Meaad Alharbi (SOS / ISS of BC)

Julia Wu, Irene Chanin (bc211)

Alexandra Dawley (MOSAIC)

Ann Barrard Ball (New Hope CS)

Dustin Lupick (HSABC)

Nicole Stinson (BC Housing)

Moe Zaqout (MAP), Jenny Moss (MAP)

Co-Chair: Derek Chu (Kinbrace)

- Derek welcomed everyone - Introductions
- Outline of Agenda – Approved
- Minutes of Nov 21 HWG meeting – Approved

UPDATES

• a. **From CCR Consultation**

i. **General Housing Related Updates**

Meaad (SOS): housing was not a priority like legal issues.

Alexandra (MOSAIC): The priorities were: eligibility concerns, benefits

Alexandra is now a member of the CCR **Internal Working Group** and she updated them

Upcoming discussions: Wed 29 Jan at 11 am – there will be a discussion re: challenges for housing

Thurs Feb 6th: housing limitations, esp. single refugee males

The consultation was also an opportunity to talk about the biometrics challenges that refugee claimants may be facing. And they discussed delays with work permit applications that affects how claimants can or can't support themselves and move out of shelters or transitional housing into permanent accommodation.

ii. **CCR Resolution on Housing that was adopted in June 2019**

No developments

• b. **Update on MJTT Project**

(Now: Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness (MJEDC))

Richard (MAP Co-chair): The project contract has now been signed.

Alexandra (MOSAIC): we are in the process of hiring project coordinator

Richard: Described the **Advisory Committee** – categories, nomination process (see slides attached)

First report needs to go to MJEDC in April – the MOSAIC coordinator or Alex/co-chairs will create this.

Jenny will send out nomination procedure in the MAP bulletin for the Advisory Committee AND the MAP co-chair position which is also up for election at the same time. She will send reminders separately.

• c. **Update on housing and other claimant issues around Canada – Barry**

- Barry is clipping stories across Canada and around the globe about refugee claimant housing – he shared the first.

- Barry will share these via email every 2-3 months.

- They will also be placed on mapbc.org – under housing and distributed to HWG

- Request to date all articles. Archives will be kept online also

Thanks Barry for this useful resource

• d. **The Chatham Ontario pilot of hosting claimants in small centers – Barry (report attached)**

- Cornwall and Belleville have recently been added to the pilot – 100 families more

- Finding was that anticipated obstacles were easily overcome – but fundamental was consensus not only at local govt level but also at community level.

- One clear reason for success – Chatham had many staffing needs – there were IT specialists and engineers in the pool of Syrian refugees – so Chatham was well-motivated to support them.

- Refugees volunteered to go to Chatham. They had no diasporic support, but all spoke English.

- Appropriate communities need to be driveable (1 hour – 1.5 hour) from a major center where there are govt offices they need.

- In Chatham they used Service Canada office.

- There needs to be some local support for help to claimants

- Health issues – local govt. screened to avoid possibility of any major health issues.

- Expect that this will increase to 300 families – this helps cities like Toronto and Montreal

Comments & Questions:

James – received a call from someone in Cache Creek about helping a claimant there – would it be possible to replicate there?

One of the challenges is that all families sent to Chatham were in permanent housing within 10 weeks.

Richard – this model is what is being done in Abbotsford already.

Alexandra added – Prov govt has helped a lot in BC. They have been a driving force helping us connect with agencies like Chilliwack Community Services, and have become great advocates for refugee claimants in the region. This is happening in a number of BC cities through the support of the provincial government.

Doug – request for MAP to capture the info, esp. the municipal involvement, in Abbotsford; to be able to levy interest in more municipalities

Khim – agreed that we should share these success stories.

Derek – where did the refugees stay for the first 10 weeks?

Response: In hotels. Resolved housing crisis quickly as they were motivated to get on

Doug: Suggested this could be included in new MJTT project.

- **e. Agency Updates**

Meaad (SOS)

From **BC Refugee Hub**: settlement & housing report:

186 clients – Oct

208 clients-Nov

153 clients-Dec

Total for 2019: 2,050 new clients (SOS/ISSofBC statistics)

Main challenges: was moving people to permanent housing.

trans-gender numbers increasing and difficult to house sometimes

- **Nicole (BC Housing)**
Suggested that HWG should reach out to BC Union of Municipalities with strategies and ideas.
- **Julia (bc211)**
Irene Chanin is their new CEO and bc211 is looking forward to working on MJTT project (Advisory Committee)
- **Richard (inasmuch)** – is jam packed!
- **Ryan (Kinbrace)**
BNNPHA Conference 2019 – the presentations, including MAP's, are now [online at BCNPHA](#)
Ryan attended for all 3 days – lots of funding available
- **Dustin (HSABC)**
Homelessness counts will take place throughout BC between March 1 and April 30. Metro Vancouver and Fraser Valley will conduct their counts on the night of March 3 in shelters and all-day March 4 on the street.
There will be over 25 different counts – and this year the count will include refugee status
Criteria: "you don't have a place of your own where you pay rent and can stay for 30 days".
- **Julia**: bc211 will offer training on how to do the one-day count – survey form.

Question:

Nicole (BC Housing) – why aren't people in transition housing included?

Response: Housing count policy doesn't allow for those in transition housing of any type

Alexandra: what about couch-surfers?

Julia: bc211 can help if you want to include such folks.

- **Jenny (MAP)**
Received a referral to the new coordinator of the Lower Mainland Rent Bank system (<http://bcrentbank.ca/>) (funded by Vancity) – **Melissa Giles**. There was a suggestion that claimants might be able to use them for emergency situations like a temporary shortfall in income, missed utility bill or month's rent. However, eligibility is uncertain. Melissa will send more information once she has contacted some of the banks and may present to HWG.
- **Alexandra (MOSAIC)**
 - After a discussion with MJEDC, MOSAIC and SOS have revised their methods of collecting data on clients served. This will result in a standardized collection methodology and there will be information from more agencies available.
 - MOSAIC is now providing collaborative services in Langley that had formerly been a gap.
 - Working with Victoria Centre for Torture – film event coming up
- **James (Journey Home)**
Journey Home is working through the process of setting up a separate entity from JHC which will house the Meanwhile Spaces and any other housing projects.

a. **BUSINESS**

Nominations for the Advisory Committee for the MJTT Project

- Nicole volunteered to represent **BC Housing**

Questions:

Re: Settlement services representatives: not many – the committee needs to stay small.

Re: IT rep – probably we will need to look outside of sector.

Suggestion: Google etc. have volunteer programs – we could contact them and inquire

We may need a call out if nominations don't come in. Jenny will communicate via bulletin and email

b. **Discussion: Do transitional housing providers have priorities for who they take in?**

Question to agencies: How do you bring in clients who are aligned with your priorities?

Richard: inasmuch uses the vulnerability lens (assessment tool) plus our current capacity.
Priority needs to be single men – too many single men stay in shelters for too long

Nicole – rent supplements would help – so young men can afford same as mother and baby.

However – initial housing needs to be supported housing – with services for new claimants.

SUGGESTION: Bring together Shelter Managers to address the violence issues – meet as a group.

Dustin (HSABC): How is vulnerability assessed?

Richard: 3 transition houses share an intake form to utilize same vulnerability assessment

Julia (bc211) in their experience single men are often considered less vulnerable because according to Red Cross' vulnerability criteria (that bc211 uses) they are less in need of emergency housing than women and families, unless they have another complicating vulnerability like a disability, so many go to shelters.

c. Follow-up discussion: HWG Going Forward:

In the Sept 26, 2019 HWG meeting it was decided that the HWG will continue as an active MAP working group. Some comments from the minutes:

1. *James commented that HWG still has lots to do – predict 3,500 RC arrivals this year (50% increase).*
2. *Doug: this is an area of great vulnerability for RC's – we need to do everything possible to limit the number of RC's having to enter the shelter system.*
3. *Patricia agreed – and added that HWG must also pursue the objective of real housing for RC's.*
4. *Khim: HWG needs to continue to increase available housing stock.*

Question to members: What are some ideas for what we can do? What is HWG's role in increasing housing stock?

Jenny: Networking, sharing news and challenges

Nicole: Housing advocacy – connect with Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Advocate for Rent supplements
Maybe we should put something together?

Khim (Options) Support to MJEDC project – referral system

Doug (Journey Home) – liaise with municipalities and discuss the needs and possible solutions.

Richard: maybe meet just bi-monthly, and very focused.

Agreed that HWG Co-chairs would look at the **Terms of Reference** and prepare an update for approval

ADJOURN - next meeting March 26, 1pm at Canadian Red Cross: 3400 Lake City Way, Burnaby