

MAP HOUSING WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES

Thursday May 28, 2020 - 1:00 pm

PRESENT:

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

Derek Chu, Ryan Reid, Luke Greidanhaus (Kinbrace)

Richard Belcham, Tammy Johnson, Alissa Cook (inasmuch)

Jenny Lam (Options)

Imtiaz Popat (Independent)

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)

Nicole Stinson (BC Housing)

Julia Wu (bc211)

Moe Zaqout (MAP), Jenny Moss (MAP)

Co-Chair: Derek Chu

- Derek welcomed everyone - Introductions
- Outline of Agenda – Approved
- Approved: Minutes of April 23, 2020

- **Agency Updates during COVID-19**

Ryan (Kinbrace)

Resuming semi-normal operations with physical distancing

Meaad Alharbi (SOS)

Successes:

- turnout to online workshops – multilingual series of workshops in different languages useful to RC's: settlement, housing, financial support, employment, legal matters.

In collaboration with Kinbrace, Options and the Immigration & Refugee Legal Clinic.

Over 200 attendees. A survey of RC clients helped them adjust their workshops to needs of attendees.

Promoted the workshops via their mass texting messaging system: Newcomer Info. Has helped us a lot to communicate and update.

- produced videos before the pandemic for claimants on how to fill out applications and these videos have been very useful as they are available via BC Refugee Hub

Challenges:

Staff were under lots of pressure to adjust to the new working format and helping extremely stressed clients.

Contracted a clinical counselor to help with staff debriefings – very successful.

Julia Wu (bc211)

Transitioned staff to working from home quickly

Challenges: some technology issue, and with volume of calls to do with the new project 'Safe Seniors'

Now with the borders closed the 211 system isn't being used much, so they are using their time to identify changes in other services, resources have been deemed a priority as many have had to change their mode of operation. Waiting to see what changes Phase 2 brings for direct service providers.

Tammy (inasmuch)

Managed to transition well as they had a lot of tech support.

They transitioned out of their office (which is in a house) to working from home.

Challenges: Missed the 1:1 interaction – though Angela (Education) has put ESL and Conversation Circles online as well as other services: have used Zoom to provide a connection even though it isn't the same.

Within the homes the social distanced visiting has helped.

One resident's daughter needed surgery – and it is being done right now which is a relief.

James Grunau (Journey Home)

Have been able to move people in and out successfully, and transition settlement services online.

Challenge: has been community building – harder to do especially for the new residents.

Nicole Stinson (BC Housing)

Work directly related to pandemic as well as core functions.

Applications to the housing registry were closed for a while – but now re-opened.

Launched the temporary rental supplement program as part of pandemic response – moved a lot of staff to help with this.

Decampment of Oppenheimer Park in Vancouver, Topaz and Pandora Parks in Victoria.
About 600 homeless individuals provided indoor accommodation in their own rooms.
Worked closely with Ministry of Health and health authorities because of the pandemic and opiate crisis, and lots of partnership possibilities emerged.

This week the Community Partnerships Fund was announced – capital funding project.
This is a BC Housing project with funding from the Provincial Government's 30 Point Plan for Housing.
Will close in January 2021 – extended call because of the pandemic. But there will be ongoing assessment of applications and construction-ready projects could start as early as September.
Link: (<https://www.bchousing.org/projects-partners/Building-BC>) – has call for proposals and templates.
Think it is very appropriate for this group and partnerships are very favorably looked on.

Question: is refugee claimant transition housing eligible for the community fund?

Response: Yes. To avoid confusion please know that BC Housing uses the term 'Transition Housing' often to refer to housing for women fleeing violence – not the kind of transition housing we talk about at MAP HWG.

Transition housing for refugee claimants are eligible projects and MAP HWG housing providers are eligible to apply.

Question: is this fund separate from the \$4.8m fund for refugee claimant housing? And is it possible to apply to both?

Response: Yes, entirely separate – and in fact if you were to bring additional funding to this application from another source it would be very favorably viewed as increasing equity.

Alexandra (MOSAIC)

Since end of March offered 42 different workshops with Kinbrace, inasmuch and Options. Topics covered: Covid -19 benefits, housing and a 5-part employment preparation series with inasmuch.

420 claimants have benefitted – received strong feedback and info about how people are coping during the pandemic.

e.g. apparent that some claimants have applied for CERB even if they don't qualify and they will have to pay it back. Supporting people in terms of paying their rent and where to get assistance.

Currently undertaking a refugee needs assessment to ID gaps and provide help where its needed. Includes a survey that needs 100 responses – now at 50. The survey includes all-encompassing questions and one issue that was apparent quickly was the isolation and need to connect.

As a result developed 'Table Topics' – a time to practice English and ask questions, run by RC's

Focus groups starting on June 10 to talk about areas of need:

Presented to CCR on Tuesday 26 re: housing.

Question: Why are people found ineligible for CERB?

Response: They didn't meet one of the criteria. Govt is immediately approving applications and will audit later.

Another issue is that there's an understanding that those eligible for CERB are automatically eligible for BC Rent Supplement Program – and in the end, if not eligible, they may have to pay it all back.

Clients are being advised of this.

Ann Barnard Ball (New Hope)

Changing over to virtual.

Found more rentals available after telling residents they didn't have to move during the pandemic.

As a result – 5 move-outs so far and 3 move-ins with 2 more soon.

Learned how to do move out and in at a social distance and provided orientations virtually.

Scott Small (Catholic Charities)

Not many refugee claimants – fewer overall.

Becoming more clinical in approach to everything – way more protocols in the way to work. More gowns and masks – people are accepting it more and creating a more welcoming, because safe, environment.

Next meeting Scott will reflect on this process.

Jenny Lam (Options)

Also many online workshops in collaboration with others.

As of Monday June 1st the office will open to provide certain services in-person by appointment.

Majority of services still by phone or online – but some clients don't have access to a computer or need to sign documents.

Problem with Service Canada closed – so claimants with work permits can't get their SIN number. The process is available online but sometimes the system is down. The whole process is delayed.

Also claimants have difficulty finding rental suites as landlords are stricter.

Dustin Lupick (HSABC)

For members and non-members all our training is online and there are many webinars available re: shelters, some provided by VCH and different protocols applicable – anyone can access via their website.

Question: Any update on whether the conference will go forward in November?

Response: Doubtful. The BCNPHA is going virtual, and probably HSABC too.

- **Update on HWG's Co-Chairs Call with MJEDC – James Grunau**

2 weeks ago Derek and James called Maia McKinley at MJEDC (Policy) to see where things are with the RFP – Joni joined that call.

Our concern was around timing – especially as everyone is busy with the pandemic, the lack of claimants arriving, and a concern that our capacity isn't at a level where we could respond now.

The ministry are experiencing the same – and as policy department they need to connect with other departments and no-one had much capacity to respond.

Probably not to expect anything before fall – and in fact the file hadn't moved very far since February.

Recognized they didn't want to exclude anybody – including those beyond HWG, so James and Derek added more input for them to take into account and wait till this funding is rolled out.

Nicole (BC Housing): since March/April BC Housing has not been in a position to engage on this. Recently contacted Maia and clarified that BC Housing is available to assist with advice re: calls for proposals for housing, and what to look for in capital projects. But not expecting any movement soon.

- **Discussion: how organizations want to move forward on any RFP for \$4.8 m**

Last time we discussed what different agencies might be planning for any response to the RFP. Because of the summer break we want to discuss now the responses that were suggested last meeting:

- A lead agency and a strong collaboration. Likely unrealistic.
- Wide open competition
- Middle ground – communicate as to our plans as agencies.

The co-chairs would like to ask if at June HWG meeting you would share your agency plans with the group, after consulting with your colleagues and describe:

- what's the general idea you have?
- dollar value?
- would there be value in HWG having a coordinated approach?

We understand that may not be of interest to members, but we want to know if there is interest in communication in terms of submitting plans. For example, we may have a very high dollar value for all our plans, so coordinating and compromising might help get what we need.

Also recognize that everyone needs to buy into – or no-one, as a half and half approach won't work.

Feedback please?

Richard: Inasmuch

We have a project we are committed to and would support a communicated approach if not a collaborative approach. Basically, we support an approach that lends most likelihood to success – and would also avoid duplication.

Also need to balance size of projects so communication would be very useful – communication might even lead to collaboration if that would win the project – and hopefully Nicole and Joni Rose can offer us guidance as to how to approach the RFP.

Nicole: BC Housing

In terms of BC Housing's thinking partnerships are always a positive – they might indicate support of the community, of your sector, complementing the work of others in your sector. Builds a very strong case and would be what we would advise the Ministry if they asked.

Doug: Journey Home

In terms of the needs of claimants it would be useful if each interested agency could bring the following information: size of project, number of people to serve, geographical region, and services projected. This might help with a coordinated response mapping against where settlement is happening.

Meaad: SOS

We are not interested in this project but would support Journey Home.

James: In conclusion: please think about this as agencies – the co-chairs are not pushing any particular project but would like more communication. It will be a major part of our June meeting. Please discuss with your agency and come prepared to share in June.

MJEDC Referral Project Update – Alexandra

Currently going through the process with MJEDC to go through all the processes correctly to hire a consultant.

Background is that MOSAIC interviewed several candidates, but no-one met the requirements. So, we are identifying a consultancy to take on this work in compliance with the ministry's expectations.

We are in Phase 1 and have begun the following 2 tasks:

- We (MAP) had also identified the membership of an **Advisory Committee** – with delays of the pandemic and administrative challenges the first meeting is now taking place on Monday June 8th.
- Currently involved in a scan of available housing and inventory systems for claimants. Will bring more information of that at the next meeting.

Question: When do you think the coordinator will start?

Response: Saleem has responsibility for this one – but we are working very closely with Joni to make sure we fulfill the Ministry's wishes, as well as MAP. In negotiation with the Consultancy as to their capacity.

Joni (MJEDC)

Concern was the cost of a consultancy – want to see good value for money of an employee coordinator.

HWG Co-Chair Nomination Process – Derek (nomination documents attached)

Adapted the process from the MAP nomination procedure:

Criteria for nomination:

- Must be a HWG member agency
- Any nominee must be a member of MAP in good standing
(if not a MAP member there is time to become one)
- One can nominate themselves
- Must be approved by your agency

Everyone has received this description of the procedure and a nomination form

Deadline for nomination: June 18 – submit nomination form to Jenny

Question: Is this one or two positions?

Response (Derek) It is only a one year term – so it would be for both positions, but Derek will stand for election.

(James) HWG hasn't developed a staggered co-chair system like MAP – and this maybe should be considered.

So, submit your nominations to Jenny by June 18 and they will be included in the agenda package for June 25 when we will ask the candidates to state their motivation for the co-chair position.

Question: how many hours does this position take?

Response (James) Good question because it depends on what's happening – at minimum a few hours a month. During the forum and the report, it was much heavier – maximum 10-12 hours/month.

Derek: really depends on what the co-chairs want to do in office.

Question: if nobody stands will we just have one co-chair?

Response (James): Let's wait till June 18 and address if that becomes necessary.

Discussion on HWG's purpose going forward – Derek

Approaching the summer months without meetings so next (last) meeting will cover:

- Keeping connected and supporting one another
- Discussion on how to collaborate on any RFP for \$4.8m from MJEDC
- Even discussion about the new Community Partnership Fund from BC Housing – how we can collaborate.
- In the fall the new co-chair partnership can decide how they want to move forward.

Announcement: World Refugee Day – Jenny (promotion attached)

This year WRD has to go online so it will be very different from previously:

Proclamation from the Mayor of Vancouver, refugee stories, music, poetry, special guests, message from CBC The National.

Wonderful WRD planning team including Luke who started even before he arrived in BC, Richard. Moe and many others.

Ask to everybody is to share the information with friends, family etc. The webinar has lots of capacity, but your help is needed to get the word out.

Also:

- Please register now at <https://mapbc.org/about/events/>
- We need a transition house settlement worker to be on the panel with other settlement workers – so please let me know if someone at your agency would be prepared for this role. 20-minute event.

James: Congratulations to Moe on his recent success and new life in Canada and with us here at HWG,

ADJOURNED - next meeting will be June 25, via Zoom