



MAP HOUSING WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES

Thursday September 23, 2021 - 1:00 – 2:30 pm online

PRESENT:

Brad Kinnie, Doug Peat, Barry Growe, Ricardo Rocha (Journey Home Community), Ryan Reid, (Kinbrace), Tammy Johnson, (inasmuch), Julia Wu (bc211), Jenny Lam (Options) Joni Rose (Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MUNI)), Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC), Jackie Sarvini (MOSAIC), Jenny Moss (MAP)

Regrets: Ann Barnard Ball (New Hope)

Chair: Doug Peat (JHC)

Welcome, and land acknowledgement from the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Kwantlen nations.

- Introductions – welcome to Jackie Sarvini (MOSAIC) who is the new Acting Coordinator of the BC CHARMS project and to Ricardo Rocha (Journey Home Community) who has joined the Meanwhile Spaces project.
- The June 24 HWG Meeting Minutes were approved.
- The Agenda for this meeting was approved.

Updates

- **Update: MAP Emergency Plan – Barry Growe (JHC)**

Richard described the process we have undergone: – survey of MAP agencies, results of which were captured in a report which has produced a very solid foundation for continuing emergency planning. The report, circulated to MAP members and sent to the Provincial government, includes very specific recommendations for responding to a surge.

At this point we have not seen the ‘surge’ we expected at the border because of various pandemic controls plus STCA still in place. However there has been the unanticipated crisis in Afghanistan that has led to a different kind of demand on the system. The Afghans arriving are largely being supported by ISSofBC – some agencies are also being asked about housing.

In September the border opened but we don’t know if refugee claimants are arriving if they fulfill the

restrictions mentioned above.

But it is essential that we continue to plan to avoid being overwhelmed in a surge.

Recommend that MAP agencies:

- participate in a smaller task force to move ahead with the report to put in place a practical plan.
- Essential that we work very closely with government.

Questions/comments:

Doug asked Barry to explain his background and knowledge of the area:

Barry has 20 years + experience at Canadian Red Cross in policy and planning in Disaster Management.

Joni (MUNI): what would trigger certain responses? – at what point would a definition of surge be used in areas like housing? We need to identify thresholds to be able to define an emergency.

We can't plan unless we know those trigger points in different areas of assistance.

Possibly the data can come from BC CHARMS. (Marzieh agreed)

Nicole (BC Housing) – You would need the trigger ahead of a disaster so the system could respond in time for the demand.

Doug – has HFIS started tracking claimants? Has the trigger point for single men already passed if you look at the situation with shelters.

Joni – looking to get that info from HWG – or later from BC CHARMS – challenge is right now we don't have the baselines to start from.

Responding to Nicole – possibly could have a phased response – e.g., after a certain trigger preparations could be made, next trigger would start direct action.

Nicole – not sure if HFIS is tracking this really – BC CHARMS will be much more useful.

AND we always know that homelessness is under-reported – the data is captured but not analyzed in terms of immigration status.

Julia (BC211) – One thing that 211 might be able to help with is data from our shelter updates. We have historical records of when we check with shelters daily and what they tell us about availability, – though not sure it is accurate!

Nicole – Shelters are almost always at capacity – REMEMBER - shelters are not an appropriate response for refugee claimants – they are not set up for claimants and can be further traumatizing.

Julia – agree – they are inappropriate and there is no space – we need other options.

Jenny Moss: Please join the Emergency Task Force if you have skills to share.

- **Refugee Claimant-overview of massing study- discussion on 3 options – Brad Kinnie (JHC)**

Brad had specific questions for feedback after the presentation to MAP BC:

At the Reception centre they are planning to receive 150/month – for an ideal stay of 3-6 weeks

Identified that single men need different space to women/families.

Q: How many settlement workers needed onsite?

Q: How many Housing Placement workers needed?

Q: What would be the ideal model for housing single men? How many men to a room?

Would it be different for single women?

Q: Which of the following 3 different models is preferred?

- single site
- multi-sites, smaller reception centers (2/3)
- hub + neighborhood centers

Responses:

Joni: Is there a timeline on final RCRC report?

Response: taking longer than anticipated so hoping for a report by end of year.

Tammy: If residents were at the same reception centre, then maybe you could double up on settlement workers?

How many settlement workers? We are usually overloaded, but industry standard is 12/17 clients per caseworker rule of thumb.

How many Housing Placement Workers? Maybe settlement workers could double as housing search workers?

Nicole: rent supplements – quicker solution than purpose built?

Refugee Claimants are not eligible now – but worth working on.

The most ideal program is the **Homelessness Prevention Program** – targets people who are homeless or at risk. It does not include claimants, but it is more flexible and maybe could in the future be used.

BC Housing has federal funding – and as such can include claimants – so could be used for rent supplements.

Rent supplements are a powerful tool for assisting in housing.

Marzieh: number of settlement workers needed depends on number/type of services provided at the reception center.

3-6 weeks is a very short time for someone with no income or local knowledge.

3 months would be better – then they would be receiving income assistance and could rent.

Brad agreed that the key is the starting of income assistance.

Joni: In terms of staffing don't duplicate what BCSIS is already doing – try to work with current structure.

Brad – we agree – collaboratively we could locate some of those BCSIS services at reception centre – sharing workers from agencies.

Jenny Lam – Echoing Tammy and Marzieh – in terms of caseload management workers usually have 15 max – but it depends on the depth of information needed – it could be very efficient if not too deep.

BCSIS: Max 20 clients/month for those working with employment format.

(From CHAT) Julia: curious about longer term plans. How long do settlement workers assist clients usually? What happens after the claimants leave the reception centre and need further settlement help? Would those settlement workers still help the claimants or is the idea going to be to connect them to someone more in their local community?

(From CHAT) Ryan: The number of case workers will really depend on how much support you're trying to offer... Shelters can have 30+ clients per worker but they're very "hands-off" and just check in with people periodically... vs a Kinbrace/JHC level of support which is very different... if you're trying to place people in longer term housing rather than just directing them to the nearest shelter.

- **Update on BC CHARMS project – Jackie Sarvini (MOSAIC)**

Report on the centralized housing referral system

- 9 implementation sessions with Apricot – creating forms etc. to meet the needs of individual users.
- internal testing being carried out to identify what remaining changes we need to make it the best tool for claimants.

Status of the BC CHARMS report book

In the hands of graphic designer – waiting for this to come back

Innovative Housing Solutions research

Interviews have commenced with lower mainland agencies and networks and will meet with them in next 2 weeks to hear their updates.

Progress on the Refugee Claimant Navigation website

Summarize website – one website with everything for new arrivals.

Meeting with the web designer next week to talk about roles and responsibilities.

We have received a rough draft of the design of the website.

Questions/Comments:

Joni: MUNI must approve report text before spending too much time on graphic design.

Agreed, we will get it straight to MUNI after the designer has made a first draft.

Jenny – take care to link the website to other expertise e.g., Ready Tour legal resources.

Response: Website will link to expertise beyond at different sites, or by citing sources.

Doug: Noted that hopefully BC CHARMS would work with a collaborative attitude and understanding for individual needs – such a looking at their mental health needs. Settlement workers and housing providers should be able to discuss special needs in addition to using the valuable mechanical service.

Response: service will not take over from the humanitarian collaborative approach – it is being designed to allow this special attention to individual needs to be paramount and be a clear, transparent system.

- **Update - MAP/BCNPHA Housing Central Conference Workshop – Marzieh**

One of the take-aways from the roundtable is the interest shown in BC CHARMS research.

As we had already been invited to participate in the conference, we agreed to share results from the project. We can use report book at conference if the funder has approved.

We have a small planning group: Doug, Jenny, Tammy, Ryan, Marzieh plus BCNPHA rep and now Jackie.

Ideas for the workshop will be presented at our meeting next week in detail, but basically entails:

- results of research
- video of two claimants sharing their housing journey
- panel discussion
- demo of BC CHARMS system – to link more housing providers to BC CHARMS.

The practical take-away from the conference would be for housing providers to add space for claimants if they could see how easy it would be to link into the referral system.

Details: November 16

Workshop for 75 people

<https://bcnpha.ca/events/annual-conference/>

- **CCR Fall Consultation Workshop on Emergency Planning - Jenny**

CCR's Fall Consultation – Workshop date is December 1st

Idea of a workshop on Planning for an Emergency was extremely popular throughout CCR

Working Group: Jenny/Derek Chu/Claire Roque & Edgar Valderrama M. (Toronto)

Richard can no longer present, so we are probably going to ask Barry to take over the presentation.

- **\$4.8mil Refugee Claimant Housing Fund – Update from Joni Rose (MUNI)**

There were no responses to the RFP and so it was cancelled by the procurement team

MUNI is right now assessing feasible options

Disappointed – even though we made some changes in response to changes we were asked to make.

Remember that the process was open to everyone, including those beyond MAP as part of our mandate, so it has to be a very formal and fair procedure.

Responses to MAP requests:

Could not change timeline. We had already provided more time at the beginning and for the call:

- Notice to Vendors (NTV) – normally 2 weeks, but here we posted for 4 weeks
- Call was posted for 13 weeks (normally 4) to allow time for thinking and planning
- Q&A extended beyond normal in addition.
- Feedback from MAP came very late in the process

Extending timeline further was not possible as we had expectations on us for fund distribution.

Also - had no way of knowing if others were interested beyond MAP.

One time funding only – purchasing / operational funds not possible under this scheme.

Currently government is looking at options including contingency planning/emergency response needs.

Please provide feedback to Joni either individually or here at MAP.

Questions/comments

Doug: Thank you for the RFP that was specifically for claimants. Appreciate the Province taking a role in refugee claimant housing.

Doug gave an example of how capital would help with ongoing plans for a single men's house – it was accepted because initially they had BC Housing support - the funding partner was what was going to make it possible. Consequently lost BC Housing support because of the pandemic and other priorities, but alternatively the \$4.8m would have helped to make this a possibility.

Conclusion: It is always hard to find the capital funds that make project possible.

Joni – but this is very challenging because this is a one-time funding

Also wondering if there is sector capacity/desire for this kind of project?

Doug: this is a major issue – usually we need to collaborate in a larger project or create a collaborative project.

Ryan: Kinbrace has a longer terms vision – but not in next 12 months.

Tammy: (Inasmuch) Our plan has been to create a house for single men – we have some strategic planning coming up with the Board – because of COVID we may need to pivot for a while from refugee claimants and set aside the single men project even though we have had a number of discussions with banks etc.

Marzieh – MOSAIC has talked with the board about a place for single males for refugee claimants and are looking for ways to purchase or rent space.

- **Update - Meanwhile Spaces (JH Community Contribution Corporation) – Barry**

We are about to become active. We have hired Ricardo who is an Industrial Engineer, a necessary team member so that we only look at structurally sound buildings.

We have been talking with one municipality: Burnaby, in order to demonstrate municipal support and encouragement to developers to lease us these buildings.

We have also started calling developers – it will take time because not all have available buildings, so often a matter of a number of referrals; but clearly the concept is being accepted well. Evidence for that is the

winning of the Systems Change grant at Vancouver Foundation. Developers understand the Meanwhile Spaces concept and are horrified at the plight of refugee claimants, the homelessness and that this is one of very few options to house them.

If your agency is connected with developers in some way, please let us know so we can organize an approach.

Question: Is the funding for research or to acquire housing?

System Change grant means the project needs to change the way housing is provided.

a) JHC realized that they should first talk to **municipalities** to change the use of housing for claimants – and perhaps other clients in the future.

b) then they began talking to **Developers** – who were interested in knowing what they could do to make their image better with government and reduce their security risk?

c) **Agencies** – how could we work with other MAP agencies?

We created a separate body enabling us to provide insurance and other safeguards for partner agencies.

That research led to funding and engagement.

Our goal – minimum 5 houses for claimants – but might need more now with the Afghan influx, like an apartment building, though funding would need to be revisited.

Joni: Does the funding cover management of five houses?

Yes, through the new entity: JH Community Contribution Corporation. Ricardo will look after the buildings and Barry is hired to talk to possible partners.

There will be a report at the end which we will pass along including the objectives and learnings.

- **How are agencies pivoting to temporarily provide housing to GAR's and PSR's (if they are) Needs and responses? Tammy**

Horrified that can't help Haitians in need – border closed and those in need cannot reach us.

Wants to know if and how agencies are temporarily shifting to provide their housing to others, like Afghan GARS/PSR's?

Inasmuch has been in conversations and are contemplating opening one of their houses to Afghan families.

Ryan – had the conversation at Kinbrace – but can't take GARS with current funding restrictions.

Adjourned at 2:30 pm - Next meeting: Thursday October 28, 2021