

MAP HOUSING WORKING GROUP

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday November 21, 1:00 pm at MOSAIC: 5575 Boundary Road, Vancouver

PRESENT:

Tammy Johnson and Richard Belcham (inasmuch)

Khim Tan (Options)

Meaad Alharbi (SOS / ISS of BC)

Julia Wu (BC211)

James Grunau, Doug Peat (Journey Home)

Alexandra Dawley (MOSAIC)

Imtiaz Popat (Independent)

Barry Growe (MAP), Moe Zaqout (MAP), Jenny Moss (MAP)

Regrets: Dustin Lupick (HSABC), Derek Chu & Ryan Reid (Kinbrace), Saleem Spindari (MOSAIC), Mariana Martinez Vieyra (VAST)

Co-Chair: James Grunau (Journey Home)

- James welcomed everyone - Introductions
- Outline of Agenda – Approved with deletion of the Presentation:
The different housing supports/services Options delivers throughout Surrey and Delta. **Slinder Balaggan**, Deputy Executive Director - Options Community Society
- Minutes from September 26 HWG meeting – Approved with 2 modifications:
 - 1) p. 3: This has been a HWG **research** project for some time
 - 2) p. 4: **HWG agreed** that Meanwhile Spaces has been a **MAP HWG research project** – but that agencies interested will forge their own contracts and can work independently on their own Meanwhile Space agreements with developers and municipalities. (ADD the word ‘research’)

UPDATES

- **Check in with agency housing updates:**

- **Richard: Inasmuch** has a proposal in at BC Housing for a home for single men
Housed 14 – 16 RC's last year – this year housed over 80.

2019 stats: over 3100 claims this year (BC Refugee Hub) – 400 in October. If this rate continues in November and December it could reach close to 4000.

- **Imtiaz:** meeting with Burnaby, hoping to see staff at Vancouver City re: Meanwhile Spaces.
- **Meaad: SOS** – last 3 months stats: 168 served for housing
Totals: Sept - 165
Oct – 107
There has been lots of inter-provincial movement and claimant expectations are very high – e.g. hope to be placed in hotels as in Toronto
Since May SOS has not had to split families because of the help of MAP transition housing societies. + Elizabeth Fry Society. Some found permanent (small apartments) housing in Surrey mostly.
- **Julia: BC211** – reviewing and updating the booklets – if there are suggestions or feedback please send to Julia at Julia@BC211.ca
Kinbrace is helping BC211 by providing information on how to find housing

Question: how are specific ethnic communities helping RC's house themselves?

Alexandra (MOSAIC): within the Afghan communities the mosques are helping – Alexandra will provide contact information

Alissa (inasmuch)– assistance is also frequent in Kurdi and Iraqi societies – they help house RC's on a temporary basis, if not ideal (overcrowding) at least it helps for a while.

Question: is Indian community helping RC's?

Imtiaz: Probably – but maybe arrive with more money to help themselves for a while.
Often speak Gujarati – not Punjabi – Imtiaz speaks Gujarati – ask if you need help.

- **Alexandra: MOSAIC**
Served about 300 RC's and noted that the large majority of the people from Afghanistan and Iran seem to have already established support through their own networks, including housing. There's been connections made with the Persian church in North Vancouver coordinating within the community; possibilities of a lot of long-term housing options for people who have just arrived.

Not so many South Asian folks needing assistance- most of them already connected to their communities in Canada, and financially stable. Some seek help applying for MSP. Also: many S. Asian claimants are inland on student visas.

- **Jenny: MAP**

There will be a local opportunity to bring claimant issues forward on Monday Nov 25th, at a meeting with Azadeh Tamjeedi, UNHCR rep. at ISSofBC Welcome center. Register to attend with Jenny.

• **Review of HSABC and BCNPA Conference presentations by MAP**

HSABC conference September 26 - 28: Tammy reported –

She participated with Iris and James, and provided a workshop mostly to frontline workers.

They provided a simulation of RC journey and a RC shared their experience. Covered the question Who is a Refugee Claimant? Talked a bit about difference between expressions: ‘illegal border crossers’ and ‘irregular border crossers’

Derek talked about MAP and website – there were questions about IFH coverage

Tried to help with issues that have come up because they are not as well informed – it would be nice to do an education project with these shelter workers.

Next HSABC meeting – Monday 25 – Tammy represents MAP HWG

BCNPHA conference November 17 – Richard reported

Also described the different ways RC’s arrive – provided the refugee simulation – no RC speaker, but shared some stories. Talked about MAP – how to navigate website.

Q&A - lots of interest about the claim process – eligibility, and in MAP’s projects.

BC Housing (Nicole Stinson) talked about eligibility for housing – encouraged participants to get clients on the list asap.

Other Presentations:

Jenny: has been reaching out to different community-based clinics serving RC’s to inform them about MAP, and plan that a MAP meeting will be devoted to a forum with many of the clinics participating to share information and their different expertise and skill sets.

NOTE: **Reach Community Clinic** (www.reachcentre.bc.ca) is opening a new Urgent and Primary Care Center (UPCC) – like a non-hospital Emergency Center. Jenny will share the Open House information in the MAP Bulletin.

Belkin House is attending MAP meetings again and providing a bigger role in housing and support to refugees.

Richard:

Last Friday (Nov 15), MAP and HWG co-chairs met with Celine Mauboules, Alexandra Lane and Barry Moss of **City of Vancouver Homelessness Services**, about Refugee Claimants in shelters and not having a lot of information on how to support them. They now have access to MAP and HWG to make sure that we connect.

Discussion:

Doug asked if we could present to different shelter groups. It was agreed that making such presentations should be added to MAP list of priorities for 2020.

Doug added that connecting with **Scott Small** would be useful when reaching out to shelters because he knows how the shelter system is designed to interact with people, and they're predisposed towards trauma informed care.

Tammy – should attend upcoming HSABC meeting.

Update on MJTT Housing Referral and Data Management project

Richard recapped the application process – MOSAIC won MAP's endorsement to be lead agency – MOSAIC submitted a proposal. Following, MJTT had some queries so after consultation with MAP and HWG Co-chairs

The budget had been submitted for the entire amount (\$1.2 m) without separating it into different fiscal years (2020 – 2022). This has also been adjusted and sent to MAP for approval and it too will be re-submitted to the ministry.

As soon as approval is received from MJTT, then the project will be posted on BC Bid for 2 weeks. The project becomes final if no issues are raised after it's posted. MAP will also invite nominations for the Advisory Committee at that point.

Everyone will be updated the project's progress through MAP bulletins.

Next steps for MAP: advisory committee.

James asked how the Advisory Cttee will be formed and **Alexandra** explained the process and called for HWG members to send in nominations of those who fit the following categories:

- (1. One MAP Co-chair
2. One Housing Working Group Co-Chair)
3. Referring agency – probably bc211
4. Government representative (s): CBSA, IRCC, MJTT
5. Housing specialists: a) Transition Housing rep
b) BC Housing rep
c) Shelter rep
8. IT Systems Consultant
9. Settlement agencies (including both BCSIS Stream B agencies)
10. Person with lived refugee claimant experience

BUSINESS

- **Clarify Meanwhile Spaces project**

Doug: It has been suggested that **Journey Home Community** take on the Meanwhile Spaces project with insurance to cover agencies who make agreements.

One of the biggest issues is liability as the developers are not going to offer any insurance.

Barry & Doug spoke to **Nancy Holmeat Echo West Developments** (<https://www.echowest.ca/>) – she suggests that if an agency is housing people in a building that will be torn down then building insurance is not needed, but person liability essential. She suggested that the developer would insist on there being insurance and that non-profit should have its own.

Barry will talk to JHC's insurers 'The Cooperators'

We also must be clear that this is outside of Residential Tenancy Act (RTA) – the residents will be called occupants or program participants. The same name they would have if they are referred by an RC-serving agency or using services at a transition house.

Process: the RC family would be placed by **Meanwhile Space** for housing via a RC agency – the agency would provide support to the family.

If something goes wrong then Meanwhile Spaces would be in touch with families and refer their needs to agencies.

Questions:

- (From many) What if there's a building issue – faulty plumbing/wiring etc. – who is responsible?
At this point we have no idea who will fix and pay for repairs – to be discussed.

However, RC's will be asked to pay their housing portion of welfare to **Meanwhile Spaces** to help with costs.

James explained that for legal purposes there will be an entity separate from Journey Home Community to organize the Meanwhile Spaces project under the provincial Community Contribution Corporation program.

- **Richard:** What is the future relationship with MAP?
James: It has been a MAP research project, but various agencies have been shying away because of liability issues – since MAP is a network it is not appropriate as a MAP project, so JHC is prepared to take it on as a **Community Contribution Corporation** project – agencies can refer in, but will not have to carry the liability.
- **Doug** – if it gets big could it be possible to bring back to MAP to see if one of the bigger agencies could take it on?
- How long can families stay? Hopefully up to a year.
Longer than the RC transition houses – or they could be used after transition housing as families would need less support. More independent self-starters.

Barry – Nancy Holme also mentioned that when we are talking up the project it's important to mention:

- The concept will save developers the hassle of leasing out their empty building. No need to worry about empty house taxes, building maintenance or residents' needs.
- Families will not be housed under the RTA – less complications.

- We can also develop a relationship with the municipality – mention that a developer is helping with local homelessness problem by using their property as a Meanwhile Space.

These are ways to talk to developers to persuade them to use their buildings for Meanwhile Spaces.

Barry also spoke to **Michael Geller**(www.michaelgeller.ca) and mentioned the use of the currently available Biltmore Hotel – Geller said it was a great idea, but not on scale of a big hotel. Michael Geller might be prepared to help with smaller properties.

To be followed up.

Meanwhile Spaces (a 3C's corporation) would have an agreement with developer and the refugee agency.

- **Question:** who will provide property management? We don't know yet

MAP Decisions:

1. Barry will be a JHC project volunteer – agreed

2. **Richard (MAP Executive Co-chair) and James (HWG Co-chair)** proposed the following:

‘Meanwhile Spaces has been a research project of MAP, flowing from the Housing Forum in May 2018 and subsequent research and meetings. It is now transitioning to become a project of Journey Home Community Society. The purpose is to research, communicate and develop spaces that would otherwise be unused, for the purposes of transition housing for refugee claimants. Journey Home is responsible for researching opportunities and spaces, liaising with developers, municipalities and government and acting as the broker between any developer and housing provider. Journey Home will share any useful information and seek input from MAP HWG members on an ongoing basis, but the project itself will be owned and operated by Journey Home and/or its subsidiary non-profit corporations. Any agreed Meanwhile Spaces projects will be the responsibility of the legal entities undertaking them, and the liability will remain with the parties involved.

It will not be considered for official endorsement by MAP until the MAP HWG is satisfied that liability issues, structure and other issues have been fully addressed.’

The following messaging will be used for public communications:

‘Metro Vancouver has hundreds of empty houses and buildings that are empty, waiting for development. The Multi-Agency Partnership has researched local and international models where such buildings have been used for much needed housing. Journey Home Community is now looking to work with developers and municipalities to open up these spaces for arriving refugee claimants.’

Alexandra: **MOSAIC** is happy to work with this project so long as they can check the building and approve it.

SOS: We can offer permanent housing solutions for after Meanwhile Spaces as part of our agreement with Meanwhile Spaces.

James – we (JHC) are still very early in the process and it's premature to make lots of decisions –but we can note there is sector wide endorsement of the concept – but not an official JHC launch of Meanwhile Spaces at this point.

Agreed it was too early to promote the project right now.

Khim (Options) – would like to see supporting it as a **pilot** with our clients.

Julia – suggested that clients are reminded that they have some time to find permanent housing, but not to get too settled.

- **Appointment of HWG co-chair to new MJTT-funded Advisory Committee**

Need to officially appoint a HWG co-chair to this committee.

Derek is willing and James suggests Derek to be the HWG representative co-chair–**all agreed**

- **Follow- up on CCR housing resolution from last meeting**

Doug – had asked about the resolution at the last HWG meeting, and how to move it forward at CCR but he hasn't followed up with CCR to date.

Jenny suggested that CCR was very busy with recent legal issues, and that has pushed housing issue behind. Possibly Alexandra and Meaad can bring it up at the consultation since they are attending.

NEW BUSINESS TO CONSIDER

- **Barry – is prepared to look for news articles** about RC's (inc. housing) to provide resources to HWG
Everyone agreed that would be a good resource – please send materials to Jenny who can add them to the weekly Bulletin.
- **Barry** has produced a paper outlining how **Chatham, Ontario** has responded to RC's moving there. The information was gleaned from a former Red Cross colleague with responsibilities there. The community has put together special services to help including distance federal help, local support etc. James – this information helps in another potential project to help RC;sin outlying areas. There's a lot of info from around the country about discontent in linking to federal bodies.
The document will be sent out to HWG, placed in the Bulletin and attached to the Minutes along with new articles.

- Meeting adjourned at 3pm
- **Next Meeting:** January 23, 2020 at MOSAIC