

MULTICULTURALISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, March 9, 2022

A Regular Meeting of the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee convened on Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 3000 Guildford Way, Coquitlam, BC, with the following persons present:

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Councillor Brent Asmundson, Chair
Councillor Steve Kim, Vice Chair
Simin Ahmadian
Carolina Echeverri
Pam Garcia (arrived at 7:03 p.m.)
Honore Gbedze
Ann Johannes
Bita Rezaei (arrived at 7:01 p.m.)
Amandeep Sangha
Iris Sun
Michelle Taylor

REGRETS: Njeri Watkins
Zahra Zaker

STAFF: Demian Rueter, Community Social Development Manager
Torill Gillespie, Social Planner
Miryana Heath, Planning Data Analyst
Jeri Hohn, Committee Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

1. Minutes of the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee Meeting held on Wednesday, February 16, 2022

The Minutes of the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee meeting held on Wednesday, February 16, 2022 were approved.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Census/Demographic Presentation

The Planning Data Analyst provided a presentation, referring to on-screen slides titled as follows:

- 2021 Coquitlam Population

- 2021 Census Release Timeline
- Who Is Counted?
- Who Is Not Counted?
- Population of Coquitlam 2021
- Coquitlam Population 2006, 2011, 2016, 2021
- Lower Mainland Map
- 2021 Land Area (Km²)
- 2021 Land Area (Km²) / 2021 Density (People per Km²)
- 2021 Population
- 2021 Population / 2016 – 2021 Population Increase
- 2016 – 2021 Population Increase
- 2016 – 2021 Percent of Population Increase
- 2006, 2011, 2016, and 2021 Population
- 2006 – 2021 Annual Average Population Growth Rate
- 2021 Population and Average Annual Rate of Growth
- Calculating Median
- 2021 Population and Average Annual Rate of Growth
- Timeline
- Questions?

Discussion ensued relative to the following:

- Expressions of appreciation for the engaging presentation
- That the City seemed to be growing at a relatively steady pace
- That growth in population and growth in dwellings were not necessarily in sync and could be reflective of various factors
- What the City hoped to achieve population-wise in Coquitlam
- That Coquitlam's population age demographics to 2021 were not yet available from Statistics Canada
- The City's growth relative to the regional targets established by Metro Vancouver and planning for that future growth
- That development applications in the City since 2020 were up 38 to 40 percent
- The importance of reviewing both data percentages and numbers in order to get a complete picture, when considering population (growth) from one census to the next
- Coquitlam's population density versus that of other municipalities in the lower mainland

The Chair thanked the Planning Data Analyst for the presentation.

3. Housing Affordability Initiatives Presentation

The Community Social Development Manager provided a presentation, referring to on-screen slides titled as follows:

- HAS Progress and Housing Needs – MAC Presentation

- Rental Project Status T2 2020
- Rental Project Status T3 2021
- Units in Process as of December 31, 2021 – Market Rental
- Units in Process as of December 31, 2021 – Non-market Rental
- Units in Process as of December 31, 2021 – Below Market
- Under Construction as of December 31, 2021
- 2021 HAS Work Program Recap
- 2022 Work Program
- Housing Needs Report
- Engagement Activity Summary
- Coquitlam Housing Stock
- Coquitlam Housing – New Housing Starts
- Future Needs
- Key Takeaways

Discussion ensued relative to the following:

- Whether staff could provide a list of online links to those developers or owners with housing units available for purchase or rent in Coquitlam
- That the City was not directly involved in the private sale or rental of housing units and, therefore, did not have such a list of links available
- That residents could engage the services of a realtor to purchase housing or search for rental and affordable housing via online resources such as rental agencies and BC Housing
- The large number of housing developments underway in Burquitlam-Lougheed, and whether the City planned to build more community centres or libraries in the area
- The list of community centres that would be serving Coquitlam as of fall 2022
- The City's intention to continue to increase the number of City parks and community centres available to serve residents
- The City's 30 percent target for multiple bedroom rental units, what the current percentage was for rental stock in Coquitlam and, of that percentage, how many were 3-bedroom units
- The low number of available 3-bedroom rental units and the challenge of tracking such rental units in the "secondary market" (private dwellings)
- The City's requirement that developers build a minimum of 10 percent of 3-bedroom units, whether for purchase or rent
- How the City goes about incentivizing its affordable housing plans and targets
- The success of Coquitlam's Housing Affordability Strategy versus other municipalities in the region
- The anticipated housing needs of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees in crisis who could be coming to Coquitlam, and whether the City could incentivize the secondary rental market (private owners) to help support housing for such refugees
- Whether the City could provide housing referrals for refugees to local immigrant services societies

- The understanding that in the case of housing supports for refugees, any incentives from the City would be provided through federal funding and, typically, such funding is only available for one year
- The possibility that some refugees could be sponsored and employed by local businesses

The Chair noted that the Ukrainian refugee crisis was an evolving situation that would require federal governments the world over to provide assistance. He encouraged Ms. Echeverri to provide the Committee with local updates relative to the issue during future Committee meetings ('Emerging Issues' standing agenda item), as more information became available. Ms. Echeverri undertook to do so.

Discussion continued relative to the following:

- Coquitlam's aging population and the steps the City was taking to support the seniors' community housing needs in the long term
- The geographic position of Coquitlam relative to other communities in the lower mainland and whether that position was being leveraged
- How the City planned to attract and keep families living in Coquitlam
- The challenges experienced by non-profit organizations when trying to assist newcomers to find affordable rental housing
- Belief in the need for better communication flow from BC Housing and other governments through to non-profits relative to available affordable rental housing

The Community Social Development Manager spoke to key community planning, development, and design considerations such as proximity to public transportation, provision of proper amenities, community centres and parks, and designing housing options for the "missing middle".

The Chair noted his belief that it would be very beneficial to seniors in need of affordable housing if the federal government were to contribute funds to the non-profit organizations who are building seniors housing, rather than offering financing that has to be paid back.

The Vice Chair suggested that if the City or a third party were to establish and maintain a map of available housing and/or housing units in-progress in Coquitlam, it could be beneficial to residents looking to purchase or rent local housing.

4. Cultural Understanding Project Discussion – Opportunity to Establish a Sub-Committee

The Chair referred to the 2015 and 2016 Cultural Understanding Project documents previously circulated to the Committee by email and provided background information regarding the Project.

Discussion ensued relative to the following:

- That the 2015 and 2016 documents were an enjoyable read and the belief that further Project work could be undertaken by the Committee

- Whether the Project could benefit from an Indigenous component

The Chair shared his understanding that Indigenous people did not consider themselves to be multicultural and suggested that representatives of the kwikwəłəm (Kwikwetlem First Nation) could be invited to come as a delegation to the Committee. He further noted that when the Project was begun, one of its main goals was to ensure that, once it was established, local cultural communities (as a whole) would take it over so that the Project could become its own, stand-alone community hub and connection point.

Discussion continued relative to the following:

- The observation that “sometimes the diverse cultures living alongside one another in Coquitlam seem like separate islands” and the desire to, as a Committee, contribute to a vision that could help to break down barriers
- The belief that although the past Cultural Understanding Project documents had “good bones”, they were outdated and need to be reconsidered/updated to reflect current best practices, conversations and evolved language
- Support for the idea of bringing kwikwəłəm peoples and community into the Project
- The original overarching goal of the Project to bring Coquitlam’s diverse communities together
- Support for the idea that the Project documents be refreshed/updated
- Clarification regarding the purpose of establishing a Sub-Committee
- Whether funding to support the Sub-Committee would be needed

In response to a question from the Chair, the staff lead noted that he was available to answer questions from the members, although, as previously shared, Community Planning did not have the capacity to undertake Project work during 2022. He noted his understanding that the new Manager Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to be hired by the City could possibly have some capacity to provide assistance with the Project in the future. The Chair noted the possibility that Council could consider the Project update as a future business plan item.

Discussion continued relative to the following:

- The belief that the City forming partnerships with community organizations and giving those organizations visibility would be key to advancing the Project
- The belief that there continued to be much isolation amongst different cultural groups in Coquitlam
- An example of the Edmonds area of Burnaby as being the most culturally diverse and, at the same time, the most isolated
- Expressions of interest by members to volunteer on a Sub-Committee and contribute to a refresh/update of the Project

The Chair noted that should the Committee agree to form a Sub-Committee, Councillor Kim had volunteered to sit as the group leader. The Committee agreed to form a Cultural Understanding Project Sub-Committee to undertake research and information gathering

relative to a potential update of the previously shared Cultural Understanding Project documents, and to report back that research and information to the principal Committee at future meetings for discussion.

In addition to Councillor Kim volunteering as group leader, the following members volunteered to serve on the Sub-Committee: Amandeep Sangha, Ann Johannes, Bitia Rezaei, and Simin Ahmadian. In response to a question from the Chair, Pam Garcia confirmed her interest in providing input to the work of the Sub-Committee, subject to her availability.

The Committee Clerk provided procedural information regarding the maximum number of members allowed to sit on the Sub-Committee and noted that Ms. Garcia could certainly provide input during the principal Committee's future discussions.

The Chair thanked the Sub-Committee members for volunteering.

5. Multicultural Communities and Emerging Issues Updates (Standing Agenda Item)

The Chair invited Committee members to share details regarding upcoming events or emerging issues in their communities. The following information was shared:

- That a series of nine community dialogue events titled "Emergence, Adaptation and Resilience" were still being held by NewToBC, the Library Link for newcomers to BC
- Details of low and high level English link classes being offered at IssofBC, including that low level registration was down and members were encouraged to please refer newcomers and potential registrants to IssofBC
- That the IssofBC leadership had met on March 9th regarding Afghan refugees and the possibility of Ukrainian and Russian refugees coming to BC, and more information was expected to come and would be shared when available
- That Nowruz (Iranian New Year) celebrations, including crafts and food, would be held at Lafarge Lake Park on Sunday, March 20th
- That Coquitlam Public Library would hold a free Iranian Film Festival of six different short films on Saturday, March 12th at City Centre Library, and a question and answer session with the filmmakers would follow the screenings
- That a Nowruz-themed story time would be held at Coquitlam Public Library on Saturday, March 19th
- That a link to an article stating "listening to employees had been identified as a top priority of Canada's Best Diversity Employers (2022)" had been shared with the Committee members
- Concern regarding the extremely high price of fuel and the belief that it could have a negative impact on the comfort level of residents, and whether the City and/or its partners could possibly communicate information to residents about the benefits of using public transit
- The understanding that typically when fuel prices rise, public transit ridership increases in response

OTHER BUSINESS

NEXT MEETING – Wednesday, April 20, 2022

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

MINUTES CERTIFIED CORRECT

_____ CHAIR

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeri Hohn", written in a cursive style.

Jeri Hohn
Committee Clerk