



## **Regional Municipality of Waterloo**

### **Community Services Committee**

#### **Minutes**

Tuesday, January 13, 2015

1:57 p.m.

Regional Council Chamber

150 Frederick Street, Kitchener

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Present were: Chair G. Lorentz, L. Armstrong, D. Craig\*, S. Foxton, T. Galloway, D. Jaworsky, H. Jowett, K. Kiefer, J. Mitchell, J. Nowak, K. Redman\*, K. Seiling, S. Shantz, B. Vrbanovic and W. Wettlaufer\*

Members absent: S. Strickland

#### **Motion to Reconvene Into Open Session**

Moved by D. Jaworsky

Seconded by L. Armstrong

That the meeting reconvene into open session at 1:57 p.m.

Carried

#### **Declarations of Pecuniary Interest under “The Municipal Conflict of Interest Act”**

None declared.

#### **Delegations**

- a) Richard Walsh, Alliance Against Poverty re: Homelessness and Housing

\*D. Craig and W. Wettlaufer entered the meeting at 1:59 p.m.

\*K. Redman entered the meeting at 2:03 p.m.

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Richard Walsh provided a presentation on behalf of the Alliance Against Poverty, to comment on the Region's affordable housing strategy. A copy of the [presentation](#) is appended to the original minutes. He encouraged the Region to invest in greater affordable housing and transit throughout the Region and to support and lobby for a national housing strategy.

### **Presentations**

- a) Community Services Departmental Overview – Employment and Income Support and Housing Services Divisions – Douglas Bartholomew-Saunders

The presentation was deferred until February 3, 2015.

### **Request to Remove Items from Consent Agenda**

There were no requests to remove items from the consent agenda.

### **Motion to Approve Items or Receive for Information**

Moved by D. Craig

Seconded by T. Galloway

That the following items be approved:

- That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo approve the following actions with regard to the Region of Waterloo's Affordable Housing Strategy and Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) (2014 Extension) Year 1 funding allocation, as outlined in report CSD-HOU-15-01, dated January 13, 2015:
  - a) Approve the Affordable Housing Strategy –Expression of Interest 2014-07: Recommended Priority Project, specifically a IAH (2014 Extension) capital grant not to exceed \$1,103,900 to the K-W Working Centre for the Unemployed for the development of 15 affordable housing units, as detailed in Attachment 1;
  - b) Authorize staff to develop and deliver the Housing Assistance With Supports (HAWS) program as described in the Report utilizing IAH (2014 Extension) Year 1 funding at a cost not to exceed \$1,316,130 over 10 years for up to 40 flexible housing assistance units ;
  - c) Authorize the Director of Housing Services to execute and deliver all documentation required by the Province of Ontario and the Region of Waterloo for the purpose of funding the recommended Priority Project proponent as shown in Attachment 1 and to finalize the funding and conditions with the proponent;

- d) Authorize the Commissioner, Community Services, to execute such agreements and documentation in a form satisfactory to the Regional Solicitor, as may be required to process the advance of funding to the recommended Priority Project proponent and for the delivery of the Housing Assistance With Supports program; and
- e) Authorize the Director of Housing Services to reallocate funding between the program components to ensure full utilization of the notional IAH Year 1 allocation of \$2,547,400.
- That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, in concert with the County of Wellington, take the following actions with respect to the Kissing Bridge Trailway, as outlined in Report PDL-CPL-15-02, dated January 13, 2015:
  - a) Amend the Terms of Reference of the Kissing Bridge Trailway Advisory Board to replace the Conestogo-Winterbourne Optimist Club with the West Montrose Residents' Association Inc. as a full member of the Board; and
  - b) Authorize execution of an agreement making the West Montrose Residents' Association Inc. a new Trailway Steward Group having responsibility for the segment of the Kissing Bridge Trailway between Northfield Drive and the Grand River.

And that the following items be accepted for information:

- CSD-CHS-15-01, Early Learning and Child Care Programs Funding Pressures
- CSD-SEN-15-01, Quality Improvement Plan – Sunnyside Home
- PDL-CUL-15-02, Region of Waterloo Museums Exhibits and Events – January to April 2015
- CPC-15-01, Waterloo Region Integrated Drugs Strategy (WRIDS) Update

Carried

## **Regular Agenda Resumes**

### **Reports - Public Health and Emergency Services**

- a) PHE-IDS-15-01, Immunization of School Pupils Act — Enforcement for the 2014-2015 School Year

Karen Quigley-Hobbs, Director Infectious Disease, Dental and Sexual Health, provided an overview of the report. She explained that in the past year three additional immunizations have been added to the list of mandatory vaccinations and a new

provincial electronic record program has been introduced. These changes are likely to result in implementation challenges. As a result staff are recommending that notification letters be issued to students who do not have up-to-date immunizations, but that no students be suspended for failing to respond to the letter during the 2014-15 school year.

In response to a question from the Committee, K. Quigley-Hobbs clarified that the immunizations have been offered to students in previous years, but were added to the list of mandatory immunizations for the 2014-15 school year.

Moved by S. Foxton

Seconded by K. Redman

That the Board of Health approve the following changes for the Immunization of School Pupils Act Enforcement for the 2014-2015 School Year:

- Region of Waterloo Public Health will issue notification letters to students/parents of students who are not up-to-date for mandatory immunizations in Ontario's publicly funded immunization schedule, or do not have a valid exemption on file
- Region of Waterloo Public Health will not suspend students who fail to follow-up on the notification letter during the 2014-2015 school year, and will resume suspensions in 2015-2016.

Carried

### **Information/Correspondence**

- a) Council Enquiries and Requests for Information Tracking List was received for information.

### **Other Business**

K. Redman noted that the issue of a needle disposal strategy was raised during the recent election campaign. Dr. Liana Nolan, Commissioner/Medical Officer of Health, stated that staff are preparing a report on this topic, and anticipate that it will be completed by the end of March 2015.

### **Next Meeting - February 3, 2015**

**Adjourn**

Moved by K. Redman

Seconded by L. Armstrong

That the meeting adjourn at 2:14 p.m.

Carried

**Committee Chair, G. Lorentz**

**Committee Clerk, T. Brubacher**

**Presentation to the Community Services Committee [13/1/14]**

**by Richard Walsh, Alliance Against Poverty**

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Region's Affordable Housing Strategy. I'm Richard Walsh, Professor of Psychology at a local university and a member of the local group, the Alliance Against Poverty, known as AAP, which has made previous presentations to Council.

Since the summer, most Out of the Cold programs collapsed, which showed how dire the need is for more social supports for the homeless. But today I want to call your attention to bolstering the *range* of housing options in Waterloo Region for low-income individuals and families and for the homeless. The frigid weather makes this urgent, when we recall that two individuals in Toronto recently froze to death, because they had no shelter. But we in AAP are aware that the inadequate housing options in this Region are remediable, because we know that at least two Canadian municipalities – the City of Vancouver (pop. c. 600,000) and Medicine Hat, Alberta (pop. c. 61,000) – ensure that their most vulnerable residents, the homeless, have safe and secure housing. If these municipalities can do it, so can we, despite the facts that Canada has no national housing strategy and the Chretien-Martin governments chopped the social transfers to the provinces, which crippled social housing.

Now, maybe from your perspective the last decade has been a success story for affordable housing. In 2001 the Regional government committed to build 1000 new units of affordable housing by the end of 2005. Then in 2005 and again in 2008, 500 units were added to the original goal. By the time you released your "Renewing Our Commitment" report this past May, over 2000 units had been added over 13 years. But from our perspective, your renewed commitment is good, but inadequate [I'd give it a C+], because it falls far short of meeting the

basic need, namely, affordable housing for all the Region's residents, which is a fundamental human right. And the lack of safe, secure, and affordable housing has very significant social side-effects, as you point out in your "Region of Waterloo Comprehensive Approach to Poverty Reduction." I quote: "*The financial costs of poverty, both direct and indirect, can impact areas such as health care, policing and corrections, and lost potential. The bottom line - we can't afford poverty.*" We strongly agree.

Now I turn to the problems that we see in your housing plan.

First, consider your goal of building 350 new units and retaining 350 old units through 2019: Despite the over 2000 new, affordable housing units that were added, the waiting list for affordable housing has remained relatively stable at approximately 1200 families. Obviously, there is a growing demand for affordable housing, which will continue to expand as the population increases. Decreasing the rate of new units reaching the market during this time of austerity budgets and precarious employment surely means that the Region will fall farther behind in meeting housing needs and that the waiting list for affordable housing will escalate.

Secondly, your May 2014 "New Affordable Housing Strategy" doesn't make any clear spending commitments for affordable housing. You highlight that for every \$1 spent by the Regional government, \$12 were leveraged from other sources, for a total of only \$14.8 million in capital expenditures since 2001. Spending \$14.8 million on affordable housing, not annually, but *in total* over 13 years, is pathetic, given the escalating needs, especially when compared to the police budget that is now greater than \$140 million *annually*. We believe you should rearrange your priorities and "put your money where your mouth is," that is, make a concrete monetary



commitment that reflects a robust, affordable housing strategy, but that does not rely chiefly on the dubious financial support of provincial and federal governments.

Of course, we also recognize how important ample federal and provincial financial support is in developing a strong housing strategy for our Region. However, to repeat, your proposed AHS does not fully address [1] our Region's affordable housing needs, or [2] the range of housing types required (emergency shelters, supportive housing, and affordable housing mixed with market-rent units). In addition, the *location* of the housing is crucial. As I stated to you last year, along the LRT route is "*where people who are dependent on transit need to live. Improved transit won't help lower-income people the way it should, if they can't afford to live near it. Both affordable housing and affordable public transit are essential to eliminate poverty.*" Overall, then, your AHS proposal simply sets a "*realistic*" goal based on uncertain funding. Clearly, the proposal needs serious re-thinking. Here's our advice:

[1] Re-evaluate the goal set forth in the new AHS, i.e., 350 new units. The goal should be to reduce the size of the waiting list and should not be constrained by the availability of funding. The housing needs should determine the funding required, not vice-versa.

[2] Make a monetary commitment to support the goals of the new AHS. While the commitment might be relatively small, say \$2 million, it will be symbolic. Housing should be your priority and should be reflected in the budget. Practically, committing housing funds now might help during years if there's a shortfall in federal or provincial funding.

[3] Instead of simply noting insufficient federal and provincial support, you and your colleagues on Regional Council should *advocate* for housing. Pass a resolution on the need for a national housing strategy. Then the Regional Chair and a Council delegation should convey the



resolution to the four MPs who represent us in Ottawa. Tell the federal government to reorganize their budget to ensure that a national, publicly supported, housing strategy materializes so that everyone can experience safe, secure, and affordable housing. This step is crucial, because local and regional planning is weakened when funding is uncertain.

Now, there are three other, practical housing matters:

[1] Wherever new affordable housing is built, mix affordable units with market-rent units, and build mixed-rental housing in locations accessible to food shopping and health care.

[2] A small-scale landlord who has intimate acquaintance with the stresses on low-income tenants reported to us the following easily solved problem. As I said last year, *“individuals are eligible to receive last month's rent in advance only if they are discharged from a shelter, psychiatric ward, or jail. In effect, individuals must be institutionalized before receiving last month's rent to move into an apartment. In our view, this policy obstructs finding affordable and safe housing.”* So, please correct this unjust practice by expanding the criteria for obtaining last month's rent.

[3] The last practical matter concerns GRT. As I noted last year, GRT's business-plan of recovering ever more of its operating costs from the fare box is unaffordable for the poorest who simply can't afford *any* increases in the cost of bus tickets and passes, because subsidized bus-passes are in very short supply, people living on social assistance receive extremely low payments that increase only 1% annually, and the minimum wage has been frozen for years.

GRT should provide *free* bus-passes for individuals receiving Ontario Works and *subsidized* passes for individuals receiving ODSP. In addition, GRT should greatly broaden

subsidized passes, because some individuals who are not on ODSP also need subsidies for bus fare. These subsidies should come out of the GRT budget and not out of the funds for Discretionary Benefits, which the poor sorely need for food and housing. Lastly, GRT should make a minor route-change in the bus line to the Food-Bank pick-up so that people can access it much more easily and safely. If you've ever tried carrying a box of canned goods up and down the street on the way to a bus stop, as I have, you'd realize what a hardship the current bus route is for people who depend on the Food Bank.

To sum up, affordable transit and affordable, safe, and secure housing across the range of housing types (i.e., emergency shelters, supportive housing, and affordable housing mixed with market-rent units) are essential. Councillors, do the right thing for the less fortunate in Waterloo Region!

Thank you.