

MINUTES
ACCESSIBILITY AND DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers and via MS Teams

770 Vernon Avenue

Wednesday, May 1, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.

Present: Councillor Mena Westhaver, Heidi Bada, Manjit Bains, Rae Franklin (via Teams, 5:04 p.m.), Laurie-Anne Keith, Susan Mader, Reed Poynter and Caroline Quan (via Teams, 5:25 p.m.)

Staff: Sheila Allen, Director of Corporate Services (via Teams); Suzanne Samborski, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services; Dale Samsonoff, Senior Manager, People and Programs, Human Resources; Rebecca Chow, Manager, Occupational Health and Safety (via Teams, 5:53 p.m.); Jason Youngren, Parks Operational Manager, Parks, Recreation and Community Services; Sergeant Ryley Swanson, Community Engagement Division, Saanich Police Department; Constable Karen Robinson, Bike Patrol and Community Engagement, Saanich Police Department; Captain Erin Stockhill, Emergency Program, Saanich Fire Department; Andie Britton-Foster, Municipal Solicitor and Angela Hawkshaw, Committee Clerk

Regrets: Swapna Mazumder, Tony Kiyak and Stephan Herman

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

MOVED by S. Mader and Seconded by L. Keith: "That the Minutes of the Accessibility and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee meeting held March 13, 2024, be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED

CHAIRS REMARKS

The Chair gave a verbal update, and the following was noted:

- The floating bus stop tour provided an opportunity to observe the effectiveness and potential challenges at future sites. Members expressed concern that crossing bike lanes to access the bus stop could pose safety issues. While protocols and signs will be implemented, it was emphasized that the responsibility lies with the public to adhere to these regulations.
- People with strollers and walkers have given valuable feedback.
- An update on the Accessibility Plan and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy was given for the period of January to March. Voluntary data is collected for the survey. Plans to reach a larger demographic could be considered.
- Human Resources, recruiters, and the consultant assessed the survey and conducted the review.

COLD WEATHER PROTOCOL FOR UNHOUSED RESIDENTS

The Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, the Parks Operations Manager, the representative from the Community Engagement Division and Bike Patrol of the Saanich Police Department and the Emergency Program Officer from the Saanich Fire Department presented on the Cold Weather Protocol For Unhoused Residents. The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- Prior to 2018 the Parks Management and Control Bylaw, 1997, NO. 7753 did not contemplate sheltering in parks. The Regina Park encampment of over 100 tents highlighted a need to update the current bylaws to assist with the need to shelter in parks when there is nowhere else to house. These amendments aligned the bylaw with the BC Supreme Court rulings on temporary overnight sheltering in parks. These updates included a new protocol for Saanich fire, police and park staff to maintain safety.
- There are 171 parks in Saanich.
- One-on-one relationships are key to assisting and offering resources to this demographic.
- There are 4 bicycle patrol officers in Saanich. These officers are often the first point of contact.
- The Housing Action Response Team (HART) brings together government, health, police, bylaw enforcement staff and social service agencies in one team to provide support and information to people experiencing public homelessness.
- Factors like owning a dog and concerns about personal safety frequently discourage individuals from seeking local shelters.
- Many unhoused individuals struggle with drug addiction and mental health issues.
- The Victoria Native Friendship Centre offers various programs and housing to those in need.
- Proactive check-ins, provision of items such as gloves, hand warmers, and toques, as well as assistance with transportation is ongoing.
- Belongings are often left behind for park staff to handle disposal. Many of these items are weapons and needles, which presents potential risks to staff. Police presence is ensured. Personal items are stored in the parks yard for one month and then discarded.
- Public complaints are frequent.
- Enforcing bylaws is challenging due to staffing issues.
- Approximately 100 volunteers provide essential support.
- Tickets are not often issued unless the situation is extreme or dangerous.
- Taking a proactive approach helps maintain a manageable number of camps in parks.
- The Extreme Weather Protocol Committee is involved directly with the unhoused population.
- The District of Saanich is legislated under the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act*.
- All shelters in the Greater Victoria Region must be at capacity before a warming centre is activated.
- Lifetime Networks offer social connections to meet diverse public needs.
- The Backpack Project provides mutual aid and humanitarian aid to community members who are homeless.
- The CRD animal care services offer tic and flea medications, leashes and muzzles.
- The unhoused population has stabilized and is varied. A decline is noted of younger adults. Youth officers provide aid and guidance to this younger demographic.
- The time frame from 7 p.m. to 9 a.m. outlined in the existing Parks Management and Control Bylaw, 1997, NO. 7753, is based on considerations for natural ecosystems and play areas. This allows for equitable access and a safe space for everyone.

- The non-emergency line is open to the public for any concerns regarding parks and encampments.
- A resource card has been developed and is currently awaiting approval for distribution.
- Provincial services are available in coordination with municipal services.
- Individuals residing in campers and vans are primarily addressed by patrol officers.
- Bike Patrol officers do not work on Saturday or Sunday
- Officers work in teams of two to ensure safety.

The Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, the Parks Operations Manager, the representative from the Community Engagement Division and Bike Patrol of the Saanich Police Department and the Emergency Program Captain from the Saanich Fire Department left the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE FOR Q1

The Senior Manager of People and Programs presented on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Update for Q1 (memo and report on file). The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- An update from Q2 and Q3 will be presented to the committee in September.
- Between January 1st and March 31st, Saanich designed and delivered 11 accessibility awareness training sessions for employees.
- Seven cultural events were hosted, including celebrations for Lunar New Year, Black History Month, and Sikh Heritage Month. These events drew considerable attendance and received positive feedback from staff and the community.
- Community organizations could be considered to present to the committee for informational purposes only.
- The goal for the upcoming Winter Festival at Uptown is to engage the entire community and celebrate diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Engaging with community members is exciting and fulfilling.
- Surveys could be created on an annual basis for feedback.
- Different locations have been used for the events.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from R. Poynter the meeting adjourned at 6:23 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for June 5, 2024.

Councillor Mena Westhaver, Chair

I hereby certify these minutes are accurate.

Angela Hawkshaw, Committee Clerk