

MULTICULTURALISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, May 19, 2021

A Regular Meeting of the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee convened on Wednesday, May 19, 2021 at 7:01 p.m. in Council Chambers, City Hall, 3000 Guildford Way, Coquitlam, BC, with the following persons present:

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Councillor Brent Asmundson, Chair
Councillor Bonita Zarrillo, Vice Chair
Simin Ahmadian
Adrienne Ahn
Carolina Echeverri (left at 8:10 p.m.)
Leticia Pamela (Pam) Garcia (arrived at 7:05 p.m.)
Honore Gbedze
Ann Johannes
Andrea Kwasnicki
Jessica Liu
Priti Shah
Iris Sun
Zahra Zaker

STAFF: Genevieve Bucher, Manager Community Planning
Michelle Frilund, Senior Communications and Engagement Specialist
Torill Gillespie, Social Planner
Jeri Hohn, Committee Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

1. Minutes of the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee Meeting held on Wednesday, April 21, 2021

The Minutes of the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee meeting held on Wednesday, April 21, 2021 were approved.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Community Engagement Strategy - Presentation

The Senior Communications and Engagement Specialist introduced herself and provided a presentation, referring to on-screen slides titled as follows:

- Community Engagement Strategy
- Agenda
- What is Community Engagement?
- What Does Engagement Look Like Now?

- What Does Participation Look Like Now?
- What is a Community Engagement Strategy?
- IAP2 Spectrum
- Timeline
- How Can You Get Involved?
- Questions?
- Thank You

The Senior Communications and Engagement Specialist previewed the letstalkcoquitlam.ca website for the Committee's information.

She invited the Committee to participate in an online engagement activity (a 'jamboard') and the Committee provided input to the following questions:

- Is there something you heard tonight that you liked?
- Is there a question/concern or perhaps something you still don't understand from what I said?
- Is there something you have experienced in an engagement (in Coquitlam or somewhere else) that really worked and you would want to share?
- Is there something that you would want me to know or to research more in order to create the Strategy?

Discussion ensued relative to the following:

- Whether the City's engagement materials could be provided in less common local languages and/or whether interpreters could be made available to assist residents who speak those languages
- The desire that engagement materials begin with a summary of the key points being provided for public information
- The concerted effort that the City makes to ensure engagement materials are provided in plain language
- That members of the public are encouraged to ask clarifying questions regarding the City's engagement materials
- Whether the City could utilize its special translation graphic on time-sensitive engagement materials being shared with the public
- Whether the City could liaise with local schools and colleges regarding specific projects to encourage greater youth participation in the City's engagement efforts
- That Corporate Communications had been engaging with the City's Youth Council and via workshops with local school students
- The challenges of COVID-19 relative to entering classrooms to conduct workshops
- The belief that the City would need to provide youth with incentives and gratification to encourage engagement
- Best practices in communications engagement
- Whether City staff could work with local immigrant services organizations to connect with newcomers
- The belief that the City's public engagement success could be enhanced through a community ambassador outreach program
- The suggestion that residents could be recruited to act as language ambassadors to the community populations that may not typically provide input to the City
- Whether MAC members could consider volunteering to act as language ambassadors

- Whether the City could engage youth by offering volunteer hours as an incentive, i.e. intercept surveys

The Senior Communications and Engagement Specialist encouraged the members to contact her directly with any further comments.

3. Canada Day 2021

The Social Planner shared that staff had been working together to explore meaningful ways to involve MAC members in the City's Canada Day plans, however, due to the limited in-person component of the 2021 Canada Day event and the reduced online content, community events staff were not able to feature the not-for-profit groups and volunteer advisory committee members in the event. She noted that staff were optimistically looking forward to welcoming back not-for-profit groups and other volunteers in 2022.

4. Disaggregated Demographic Data Collection Sub-Committee Update (Standing Agenda Item)

The Social Planner noted the quality of the work undertaken by the Sub-Committee to date. She further noted that the staff leads and Sub-committee members had not had an opportunity to meet since the last Committee meeting in April and suggested that the update be provided at the next Committee meeting.

The Chair noted that the recent departure of the Community Social Development Manager (staff lead) had left a bit of a timing gap, and confirmed that the item could be deferred until the next meeting.

5. Anti-Asian Racism Discussion

The Vice Chair provided introductory remarks. She spoke to her desire to both revisit the topic of racism and discrimination further to a previous (June 2019) recommendation made by the Committee regarding the City joining the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination, and to receive input from the Committee regarding the news about the high incidence of anti-Asian racism and hate crimes occurring in the Metro Vancouver region. She asked the Committee to provide thoughts and ideas regarding what actions the City could consider undertaking relative to anti-Asian racism and hate crimes, and the desire to ensure that all residents are able to travel safely through local streets and parks.

Discussion ensued relative to the following:

- The belief that the Council representatives were to be commended for raising the item
- That the topic had not historically or regularly been tabled as an agenda item
- The understanding that the Committee had previously advocated for the City taking a more vocal stance against all racism, although perhaps not formally
- The over 700% rise in anti-Asian hate crimes in Metro Vancouver since the onset of COVID-19
- The desire for more Committee discussions on the topic
- The desire for the City to take a formal stance against racism and the belief that it would speak to the hearts of many on the Committee and within the community
- The good work being undertaken locally by Tri-Cities Local Immigration Partnership

(TCLIP) relative to the topic

- Whether the City could lend resources and support a joint partnership with TCLIP rather than creating a new group or format
- That residents have been calling immigrant services organizations to speak about incidents of racism that they have been personally experiencing
- The belief that there is a need for space where residents can come together to be validated, heard, and/or given guidance when they experience a racist incident
- The understanding that no such space is currently available for such confidential disclosures in Coquitlam
- That for many immigrants and newcomers, calling the Police is not their first choice for assistance
- The belief that newcomers and residents experience grief when their "Canadianism" is negated or belittled through racist acts
- Whether the City has a phone number, other than 911, for people who experience local incidents of racism
- The understanding that the City does not have a dedicated racism phone number or support group at this time and such incidents can be reported to 911, the RCMP non-emergency number, or Victim Services
- The belief that psychological damage can be had by those who experience or witness incidents of hatred and racism, even if it is not to the level of a 911 call
- Whether the City has considered establishing a local, free-of-charge support group to assist residents who experience incidents of racism and hatred
- The belief that news reporting could be contributing to the racism being seen today
- The belief that certain cultures/races of people are being unfairly blamed for international, national, and regional crises
- The desire to review and consider what drives racism and for people to stop blaming others
- The belief that racism will never be completely eradicated
- The belief that a racism/hate crime data collection program is one key to helping identify gaps and address areas of concern directly through action plans
- The belief that data collection and reporting is one important element but that the most crucial, fundamental element to combat systemic racism is societal education
- The desire that the City undertake a campaign against racism
- The belief that people must all find common ground to live respectfully with one another
- The belief that anti-racism must begin at the institutional level – that the City has a responsibility to lead and to be continuously anti-racist, and to do so it must create, actively implement, and regularly revise anti-racism policy
- Support for the idea that the City develop an anti-racism policy
- The desire that City staff to receive anti-racism training and the belief that such training would be one way to improve anti-racism dialogues

The Manager Community Planning spoke about the City's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Strategy, noting that it had been made an 'A Priority' on the 2021 Business Plan and formulation of the initiative was being led by the Corporate Services Department. She shared that Unconscious Bias training for City staff was well underway and senior management had taken a Foundations and Diversity Certification Program. She noted that management and staff had held a number of dialogues regarding diversity, anti-racism, and equity, and ideas

had mirrored much of what was being shared by Committee members during the evening's discussion.

The Chair spoke about historic cultural conflicts, intercultural racism, and provided details of the "Cultural Understanding Project" work formerly completed that had originated as a result of a past Committee's discussions.

Discussion continued relative to the following:

- Whether there was somewhere in Coquitlam that residents could call to share their experiences about racism and possibly find solutions to their concerns
- The helpful resources and links shared earlier within the chat by some of the Committee members
- Details of the racist incident hotline to be created in BC by the Provincial government
- That residents who experience racist incidents/need help can call the Immigrant Services Society of BC, Coquitlam Office, for assistance
- Appreciation for the anti-racism resources shared by members and the belief that it would be helpful to residents if the City could make them widely available
- The belief that relative to intercultural racism, education in the form of anti-racism training for community members could be very helpful
- Whether it could be possible for the City to partner with other organizations to increase opportunities and provide such beneficial training in the community
- The understanding the TCLIP had a helpful list of anti-racism resources available
- Whether the City could consider developing an anti-racism webpage that could include a list of relevant resources and links for reference by residents
- Whether the City could offer a way for residents to share their experiences with racism, i.e. tell their stories, as a means of educating others

The Vice Chair thanked the Committee for its input. She noted that with regard to the suggestion that residents be offered an opportunity to tell their stories, that it could be possible through some of the City's cultural partners. She further noted her support for the idea that the City's website provide anti-racism resources for residents.

In response to a question from the Vice Chair, a Committee member spoke about the past Committee's discussion and recommendation to Council regarding the possibility of the City making a declaration to join the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination. She noted that to her recollection the Committee did not have a robust dialogue prior to making the recommendation.

Discussion continued relative to the following:

- The belief that anti-racism is an inherent part of multiculturalism
- The belief that anti-racism could be advanced to different cultures in the community through arts and languages programming and events
- Whether the City could consider offering anti-racism or multiculturalism workshops during its Canada Day celebrations
- The belief that in addition to a webpage dedicated to anti-racism, it could be helpful for the City to have a monthly newsletter where residents could tell their stories
- The desire for the Committee to include representation from the local indigenous community

- The belief that newcomers could be unfamiliar with how to reach out to City Council members and staff to voice their concerns
- The belief that COVID-19 had wrought challenges on newcomers to the community
- The purpose behind the Welcome to Coquitlam event to break down barriers, provide access to Council and staff, and create greater understanding of local governance and services
- The belief that community ambassadors working within local immigrant services societies could offer much needed assistance and support to newcomers
- The desire that Canadian newcomers adjust themselves to the rules and regulations of the municipalities that they live within, and everyone work together to end racism
- The belief that an annual Cultural Understanding Conference hosted jointly by the City and local immigrant services societies could be key to breaking down cultural barriers

The Manager Community Planning thanked the Committee for the robust conversation, and undertook to raise the suggestion regarding offering anti-racism or multiculturalism workshops during the City's Canada Day celebrations with her colleagues.

The Chair noted Council's good relationship with the Kwikwetlem Nation and shared that the Committee had included representation from the Nation in the past and would welcome future representation.

The Vice Chair noted the 2016 Census Canada data that over 50 percent of the population in Coquitlam is Asian. She asked staff to consider the possibility of anti-racism stories being told during the City's Kaleidoscope Arts Festival, noting her belief in storytelling as one of the best educational tools and ways to start important conversations.

The Chair spoke to his belief that the City's Block Party Program afforded residents an opportunity to open dialogues with one another, build community by breaking down barriers, and combat racism.

The Chair asked the staff leads to circulate copies of the Cultural Understanding Project information to the Committee for its consideration and future discussion.

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

The Chair invited the Committee to share items of information and emerging issues from their communities. The following was shared:

- A reminder that May was Asian Heritage Month, although physical celebrations would not be held due to COVID-19
- That the City would be making social media posts regarding Asian Heritage Month and members were encouraged to share resources and links with staff
- That a recent conference at UBC had highlighted some top-of-mind issues for educators and students, including racism, global conflicts (Israel/Palestine), and the COVID-19 vaccination rollout in India
- That the ASA Alliance for Coalition Building had some excellent upcoming events promoting anti-racism through the arts

OTHER BUSINESS

Minutes - Multiculturalism Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday, May 19, 2021

NEXT MEETING – Wednesday, June 16, 2021

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

MINUTES CERTIFIED CORRECT

CHAIR



Jeri Hohn
Committee Clerk