

**Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017**  
**12-1pm**  
**Courtenay Public Library**

**Attendees:** Sabina Acheson (Comox Bay Care Society Care-a-Van), Megan Lawrence (Eureka), Chris Bates (Eureka), Bob Scales (Lions Club), Hugh MacKinnon (Town of Comox), Joyce Wilson (St. George's United), Terri Perriu (Habitat for Humanity), Bunny Shannon (LUSH Valley/CC Social Planning Society) Kathy Duperron (Village of Cumberland) Cynthia Zirkwitz (CV Seventh-Day Adventist Church), Pauline Lawrence (CV Seventh-Day Adventist Church), Betty Tate (CV Association of Registered Nurses BC/ CV Social Planning Society), Heather Ney (CV Transition Society), Jonathan Kerr (CV Division of Family Practice), Jesse Atton, Vickie Luckman (John Howard Society)

**Facilitator:** Sarah Sullivan (AVI)

**Regrets:** Nancy Carlson (Salvation Army), Pat McKenna (Habitat for Humanity), Roger Kishi (Wachiay Friendship Centre)

**Recorder:** Andrea Cupelli (Coordinator)

**1. Municipal Planners Panel Question #1:**

*Please give us an update on what strategies your municipality or RD is currently using or planning to implement to regulate and incentivize affordable housing to increase supply of below market and market rentals and/or housing with supports.*

**a. City of Courtenay - Tats Setta**

- i.* Development application fee reduction for certain suites and housing projects
- ii.* Affordable housing policies in the Official Community Plan (OCP) include the *option* to collect an affordable housing fund from developers who apply for rezoning
  1. Funds are saved for future use
- iii.* Braidwood
  1. City purchased the site for affordable housing
  2. 3-million-dollar capital project will be operated by M'akola Housing & Wachiay Friendship Centre
  3. 34 units of affordable housing rented to those who qualify through BC Housing, 6 units dedicated to those who were in shelters
  4. Currently in the process of applying for variances such as parking (asked for a reduction of spaces) & setbacks.
  5. Staff report going to council meeting on June 12<sup>th</sup> for a decision on a development permit

6. Construction slated to start sometime in the summer
7. City waived the application fee for project
8. Braidwood is a priority project for the City, and council has been really informed with the stages of development
9. Many people came to the City to express concern
  - a. good design matters, as well as how it is presented to the public

**b. CVRD - Ann MacDonald**

- i. Homelessness Supports Service funds many of the projects in the Coalition's 5 Year Plan
- ii. Approximately \$150,000 per year
- iii. CVRD includes 3 electoral areas.
  1. Some areas you need to apply for secondary suites etc and other areas allow for them
- iv. Currently reviewing zoning bylaws
- v. There are current affordable housing provisions at the Kensington development in Union Bay
  1. provisions are negotiated to compensate for density
  2. there is a requirement to donate up to 30 lots for Habitat for Humanity or another agency or they will be transferred to the CVRD
- vi. Intentional Communities are a possibility in the OCP
  1. Planned residential communities specifically made with social cohesion in mind, members share common spiritual, social, economic background, lifestyle etc
    - a. Would need a parcel of land
- vii. Regional Growth Strategy
  1. There are 8 housing goals within the strategy
  2. Assessment was done on housing inventory, with the recommendation to move from single family dwellings to higher density and with a diversity of more affordable housing options

**c. Village of Cumberland - Judith Walker and Adriana Proton**

- i. New zoning bylaws came into place Dec 2016
  1. Allows for accessory dwelling units (carriage housing, laneway houses and secondary suites etc)
  2. In the downtown core you can have an accessory dwelling and secondary suite
  3. No limit to unit size so long as it meets BC Building Code (build as small as you'd like)
  4. 325sq m lots in infill area, lot must be 650 sq m before you can cut down size of lot

5. There were public concerns about additional sewage, water, that comes with increased population, but Village noted that historically, homes had large families in Cumberland, so this isn't really changing anything
  6. Dwelling units are still pricey to build, people rent out to help amortize the cost, doesn't necessarily mean it is affordable
- ii. Village of Cumberland Affordable Housing Committee has been working on implementation and framework since 2015
    1. They are reviewing municipal incentives recommended in Appendix A of their Affordable Housing Document
    2. Committee will make recommendations to council

**d. Town of Comox - Marvin Kamenz**

- i. Town of Comox Affordable Housing
- ii. 3 components
  1. Improve affordability and remove barriers to market ownership
  2. Increase availability of housing market
  3. Increase number of low cost rentals
- iii. Allowing for redevelopment of infill lots in already existing, older neighbourhoods
- iv. Supporting rezoning for infills and new developments
- v. Reduced single family R3.2 minimum parcel of land size (middle parcel is approximately 350sq m)
- vi. Remove barriers to affordable housing and increase rental stock
- vii. Lots of neighborhood opposition to secondary suites
  1. Working better in new developments and using this as an opportunity to show people that it doesn't devalue property
  2. Secondary suites require unit to be owner occupied – no tenants, family only
  3. No additional cost to develop
- viii. Allowance for coach houses in the OCP
  1. Spot rezoning – shows people that it is okay, doesn't devalue etc
  2. Reduced application fee to \$275
  3. Sped up approval process to 2-3 months
- ix. Increased development cost exemption. 45 sq m allows for 1 bedroom apartments to be built
- x. Increased limitations on strata conversions if vacancy rate is less than 4%
  1. if vacancy rate is higher displaced tenants will be accommodated
- xi. Below market value housing

1. If rezoning more than 40 units developers require a 10% cash or land contribution which goes into affordable housing fund (currently at \$400,000) and funds can only be used to build housing in Comox
- xii. Council looking for long term solutions, Town wants to own land and lease to non-profits
  1. Looking for new affordable housing projects with scale. Not just 1 or 2 bedrooms
  2. look at larger sites, existing neighbors would not be directly impacted – new neighbourhoods only
- xiii. Affordable Housing Funds are dispersed by council resolution
  1. \$30k of the affordable housing fund goes to Coalition for projects outlines on our 5 Year Plan

## **2. Municipal Planners Panel Question #2:**

*How can the Coalition and local government planners collaborate to address the affordable housing crisis in the Comox Valley?*

### **a. City of Courtenay – Tats Setta**

- i. Planners can assist in the process of making applications, approving rezoning, making policies, making clauses, working with councilors, decision makers and senior government
- ii. Planners have deep knowledge of policy development, and can work with us to share knowledge of best practices in different municipalities and provinces

### **b. CVRD – Ann MacDonald**

- i. No restriction on sizing so long as it meets BC Building Code
- ii. Microhousing a hot topic and there will be a BC Building Code meeting on what a specific code for microhomes could look like
- iii. Homelessness Supports Service – the Coalition’s funding goes to inform this funding. CVRD and Coalition working together
- iv. Looking into provisions for an Intentional Community with small housing.
  1. Land needs to be identified first

### **c. Village of Cumberland – Judith Walker and Adriana Proton**

- i. Planners can help nonprofits to understand regulation
- ii. Cumberland has no land or finances to offer but can assist in regulations and reducing requirements to build housing and secondary suites etc
- iii. Have more regular ‘check-ins’ between the Coalition, agencies and municipalities to see where we can work together/help one another/collaborate

**d. Town of Comox**

- i.* Can encourage secondary suites (often more affordable to construct than coach houses or microhomes which on average cost about 75k\_
  - 1. 'Comox Box' style homes can easily be converted to have Secondary Suite on lower floor
- ii.* Encourage the Coalition and organizations to show up to the rezoning meetings
  - 1. Representation from organizations and concerned citizens is important so council isn't only hearing the side of people who are trying to fight against rezoning
- iii.* Developers need to see the demand for affordable housing
  - 1. Compile a list of those who are interested more developments
  - 2. Show the council and developers that this is what the community wants and be willing to talk about it
  - 3. Early adoption of these changes is the most challenging part, but once people see positive examples then momentum builds

**2. Questions from the floor**

**a. Kettle Creek Station in Goldstream, north of Victoria is a development of small homes all under 1200 sq ft on tiny lots. Do any planners know anything about this? Or are there plans to do something similar in the Comox Valley?**

- i.* Town of Comox has microlots under 3000sq feet at MacDonald and Gurthie
- ii.* Very popular development sold out before construction
- iii.* Developers will build according to demand

**b. How does each municipality define 'affordable housing'?**

**i. Cumberland**

- 1. Spending no more than 30% of income on housing
  - a. How do we define what an affordable housing development is?
  - b. What percentage of housing in a regular development should be earmarked as 'affordable'?
  - c. Is below market rate rental affordable?

**ii. Courtenay**

- 1. Developers have the option to pay a percentage to affordable housing fund, land or units
- 2. Up to the private sector and not city to determine
  - a. ex: New development on Cliffe – by Walmart
    - i. Cheapest unit will be \$900/mo

**iii. Comox**

1. Some developers are only going \$20-\$40 below market rates and calling it 'affordable'
2. Currently at the discretion of town council to decide on what affordable means on a case by case basis
3. Will cash towards the Affordable Housing Fund or an actual building or land be more acceptable? Can developers work with nonprofits to build housing that fits into the developers look and plan?

**iv. CVRD**

1. Municipalities can do housing agreements, can agree to offer rental housing at a fixed rate for a number of years in a development
  - a. We need below market rental housing in our community
    - i. How can it be administered without getting wrapped up in politics?
2. Whistler has an affordable housing bank and their own housing corporation
  - i. Has to be managed, and bylaw enforcement involved

**v. Langford Example**

1. 10% of any subdivision, complex etc are required to be built as affordable housing units
2. Langford focuses on single family home ownership as this 10%
  - a. Someone has to be able to monitor what they are selling for and enforce it or units start to lapse

**c. What sort of land do you have available for affordable housing and what would the process be for getting access to it?**

- i. Typically, the request has to be made by nonprofit

**d. How does your municipality disperse affordable housing funds? What is the process?**

**i. Comox**

1. Needs council decision to use the 400k affordable housing fund
2. Building up the fund in hopes to build large scale affordable housing project and have nonprofit run it

**ii. Courtenay**

1. Asking developers for cash contributions to their affordable housing fund
2. 450k currently accumulated over the last 10 years

3. Not a large enough scale and need a strategy and a significant project

**iii. CVRD**

1. \$150,000 a year through the Homelessness Supports Service Tax
  - a. Coalition informs where this funding will go through our 5 Year Plan

**3. Additional Questions for Consideration – Andrea to email to planners**

1. *How can the Coalition work with municipalities to explore micro-housing possibilities?*
2. *With increasing Courtenay staff resources is it possible to investigate the potential for development in West Courtenay, carriage houses, secondary suites etc?*
3. *What incentives do you offer to attract developers to building affordable housing?*
4. *What other creative solutions can your municipality do to increase affordable housing? ie: increased co-op housing, condos without strata fees, reducing parking requirements for urban developments?*
5. *What are the municipal policies regarding zoning and licensing of nightly and weekly vacation rentals? These units reduce much needed rental stock in the Comox Valley*
6. *How will you make it easier for people to conform to BC Building Code (ie: restrictions on ceiling heights etc) or advocate for Building Code changes when building or renovating secondary suites in times of severely low rental vacancy rates?*

**4. Other Coalition Business**

- a. Vote in new Leadership Team Members
  - i. Lindsay McGinn, United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island – confirmed by consensus. Welcome Lindsay!
  - ii. Sabina Acheson, Comox Bay Care Society Care-a-van – confirmed by consensus. Welcome Sabina!
  - iii. Thank you to Richard Clarke and Chris Bates for their dedication and service to the Leadership Team

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017 12-1pm at Courtenay Library  
Have a wonderful summer!**