



Meeting Notes
Ad-Hoc Committee on Poverty and Homelessness
August 29th, 2018
3:30 PM
Council Chambers, Town Hall
105 Elgin Street West, Arnprior

Present:

Clark Young, Vice Chair
Danielle Raymond (3:50 p.m.)
Debbie Hudson
Josie Scott
Liz McLaren
Lyn Smith
Renee Coady

Also Present:

Kaila Zamojski, Deputy Clerk
Emily Melanson, Client Services Admin. Assist.

Peter Emon, Community Mental Health Services
Amy Scholten, Renfrew County Legal Clinic

Member of the public:

Oliver Jacob

Absent:

Lee Dyck, Chair
Dana Smith-Hisko
David Reid, Mayor
Jennifer Remus
Nathalie Spratt

1. Call to Order

Clark Young, Vice Chair, called the Ad Hoc Committee on Poverty and Homelessness Meeting to order at 3:39 PM and welcomed those present. Each Committee Member introduced themselves for the benefit of the delegation.

Resolution No. ADHOC-014-18

Moved by: Josie Scott

Seconded by: Lyn Smith

Be It Resolved That the Ad Hoc Committee on Poverty and Homelessness recommends Council appoint Amy Scholten from Renfrew County Legal Clinic as a member of this committee.

Resolution CARRIED

2. Adoption of Agenda

Resolution No. ADHOC-015-18

Moved by: Renee Coady

Seconded by: Liz McLaren

Be It Resolved That the Agenda for the Ad Hoc Committee on Poverty and Homelessness Meeting dated Wednesday, August 29th, 2018 be adopted.

Resolution CARRIED

3. Approval of Previous Meeting Notes

Resolution No. ADHOC-016-18

Moved by: Renee Coady

Seconded by: Liz McLaren

Be It Resolved That the Meeting Notes from the Regular Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Poverty and Homelessness dated Wednesday, July 11th, 2018 be adopted with the following changes:

- Page 2, paragraph 5(a) be amended to change “Josie Scott” to “Citizen Member”; and
- Page 2, paragraph 5(a), the addition of the wording “360 Project aims to increase employability and reduce homelessness”

Resolution CARRIED as amended

4. Matters Tabled/Deferred/Unfinished Business

None

5. Presentations/Delegations**a. Renfrew County Legal Clinic (Amy Scholten)**

Amy Scholten, Executive Director at Renfrew County Legal Clinic (“RCLC”), provided a verbal presentation on the work that the Renfrew County Legal Clinic does in the local community and responded to questions.

Ms. Scholten provided a summary of RCLC:

- Established 1986, they are one of 74 across Ontario
- Amy has been with clinic for 14 years
- Independent non-profit, elected board spans country, 4 lawyers, 3 support staff + students
- Aim is promoting a ‘just society’
- Services include, but not limited to, casework, education/community development, social assistance, employment law (non-unionized), debtor/creditor, seniors law, landlord and tenant (they do not do family and criminal law)
- Renfrew is head office
- With respect to landlord/tenant, they only represent tenants but they do try and educate landlords.

For the purposes of this committee, Ms. Scholten focused on housing and homelessness.

Ms. Scholten notes legal issues tend to have a cascading effect.

RCLC have worked with groups across Renfrew County, advocating to Province on legislative changes. Ms. Scholten notes that rural areas are different than urban areas. Some differences worth noting in this area, as compared to the city, are inexperienced landlords, poor housing stock. Lack of accessible rentals are also a problem.

RCLC strategizes with area groups in Renfrew County to alleviate issues such as no fault evictions (eg. new landlord but tenant evicted, fires) and fault evictions as everyone deserves a place to call home and have security. Housing to be considered a right.

Specifically, the housing issues in Arnprior relate to non-accessible units (this is a problem given aging population and people with disabilities) and cost to rent in Arnprior. In a search performed by Ms. Scholten, only 5 places were available (1bdm/\$720, 1bdm/\$1250, 3bdm/\$1200 + hydro, studio apt/\$875 and a small \$600 rental in McNab/Braeside). This information paired with knowledge of ODSP payments (\$489) and OW payments (\$384) a month illustrate how critical the situation is. People can't afford to live and there are no units available.

Danielle Raymond asked if OW number mentioned was just for shelter. Ms. Scholten indicated there are other factors that could affect an amount.

Lyn Smith notes that there is no national housing strategy in Canada. She mentioned that a lot of clients who live in "slum lord" locations are afraid of ratting on landlord and getting evicted.

Amy Scholten mentioned this was a common problem. Clients are afraid of repercussions. Small community and word spreads. She notes that they do stop evictions regularly but they can't stop them all. She notes that often issues become worse before people even contact the legal clinic. Awareness and education is key to preserve the landlord and tenant relationship. By the time they are in court the relationship is fractured.

Renee Coady asked about success stories with other areas with respect to ideas for providing all resources (eg. The Grind)

Amy Scholten responds that that model is useful but mentions a move away from this type of model as people need more than a 2 day stay. She notes that the Ottawa model has been criticized but a shift towards permanent housing (feeling safe, secure) before addressing root causes of poverty is important. Hard to keep a job if you don't have a place to sleep, clean up, etc. Temporary housing has a place but does not fix issues.

b. Community Mental Health Services (Peter Emon)

Peter Emon, crisis worker for Community Mental Health Services (“CMHS”), provided a verbal presentation on the work of Community Mental Health Services, and responded to questions.

Mr. Emon provided a brief overview of CMHS. CMHS work on a pager system 7 days/week, 365 days a year. Assess individuals who are 14 years and older and handle a wide range of issues, including but not limited to, dementia, homelessness, abuse and referrals. CMHS need to assess, plan, introduce and report. If they don’t have a diagnosis then they have trouble putting people into a program.

Mr. Emon discussed the varying needs of his clientele. Subsets of his clientele include i) near youth (15-19), ii) youth (19-24 and iii) the rest (24+). The needs vary for each subset. Important to develop a plan to stabilize initially, then move them to related services that are offered.

Mr. Emon mentioned that for near youth (subset i)), you worry about young females. Building a relationship with this group and show them that it is ok to seek help is so important. Show this subset that seeking help does not make them weak, it is not wrong, and they are worthy. Mr. Emon shared that this is a voluntary service and you cannot push hard as they tend to run. Important to try and keep a relationship going (e.g. hand out food, gift cards).

Mr. Emon mentioned that a mash of “The Grind”-type program and Columbus House would be a good hybrid model.

Mr. Emon mentioned that subset ii) issues relate more to career path, conflict resolution and finances, for example. It is important to give the tools necessary to deal with these issues and the tools to succeed. Unfortunately, their tool box is completely empty.

Lyn Smith agreed with Mr. Emon’s comment that trust issues with clients are very accurate, especially with CPAN clientele.

Renee Coady discussed the difficulty helping and protecting those who try to help with respect to the issue of providing shelter. Ms. Coady asked how we balance helping youth while protecting those who help. A discussion of contract beds and providing shelter followed briefly touching on some issues that come up when providing shelter for people, such as, for example, safety, factors that should be in place to effectively place individuals, and which models are effective given certain sets of circumstances.

Lyn Smith mentioned that adult mental health support has been cut substantially.

Vice Chair Clark Young asked Mr. Emon what are some of the key resources used at their disposal.

Mr. Emon responded that it depends on the situation. For example, in some cases relating to woman they refer them to Bernadette McCann. Some doctors provide an assessment, including family doctors and the family health team as well. Some situations require school counselors. They essentially try to link locally first as money and transportation are issues they consider. The agency does not provide gas.

Mr. Emon discussed a challenge they face which is staying current. They must provide a tailor-made approach to meet the needs of specific clients. The job is to make the system work.

Renee Coady discussed the challenge of getting an accurate diagnosis for youth as they may not quite be showing signs.

Mr. Emon responded that we are fortunate with our medical community and said they have grown into the challenges. Mr. Emon mentioned a lot of new doctors are not hesitant to make referrals and follow-up.

Amy Scholten mentioned that Ontario Works pays for assessments related to these mental health issues (i.e. PTSD). It is helpful to get a diagnosis to take back to a doctor that help reaffirm with client their diagnosis. Clients are happy with this new change.

6. New Business

a. Round Table Discussion

i. New Community Resources / Opportunities

Lyn Smith notes she will be absent at September meeting as she is attending the National Poverty Summit. It is a workshop by Dr. Gary Bloch from Toronto. Discussions will included learning credits, supplements for housing and food, and discusses a more proactive approach, rather than reactive.

Renee Coady discussed grants for speakers and consultants.

ii. Planning a Public Event

Discussion regarding a plan to attend a Town Hall meeting – Mayor is still looking into it but it was suggested that a date after the upcoming municipal election would be best.

Lyn Smith began a discussion regarding the fire victims at First Avenue. Touched on residents who are dealing with lots of issues, aside from obvious monetary and shelter issues, but also depression and other mental health issues. Notes the highest needs

are finances and mental health. Tenants had 3 days of Red Cross and 3 days help from other funding efforts. Almost all are over 60 years of age and longtime residents in the building.

Renee Coady felt that social media could be more helpful for these victims.

Vice Chair Clark Young noted that it is hard to address specific needs as they crop up as we are still learning about all of the available services.

Vice Chair Clark Young asked if anyone had anything to offer in this specific case please do so but, at this point in time, it is hard to make a plan as a committee. Sounds like there is a will to help.

Danielle Raymond asked delegations if they had any generalized statistics around that may be needed in future for grants and proposal writing.

Amy Scholten said she had access to some numbers, such as an annual homelessness count through a group in Renfrew which gives a snapshot and she would be happy to provide data.

Josie Scott asked Mr. Emon if CMHS generates lists of days crisis is provided. Mr. Emon said numbers can be generated relating to housing provided and clients seen.

7. Adjournment

Resolution No. ADHOC-017-18

Moved by: Lyn Smith

Seconded by: Josie Scott

That the Regular Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Poverty and Homelessness be adjourned at 5:13 PM.

Resolution CARRIED

The next meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Poverty and Homelessness will be held on Wednesday, September 19th, 2018 at 3:30 PM in Council Chambers (Town Hall) located at 105 Elgin Street West, Arnprior, ON K7S 0A8.