

## **Newcastle Community Association –Update on BC Housing 250 Terminal Avenue**

**Tuesday, February 6th, 2024, at 7 PM on Zoom and in Person at the City's Service and Resource Centre located at 411 Dunsmuir Street**

The meeting was called to order by NCA President Karen Kuwica at 7:03 PM.

### **1) BC Housing/250 Terminal Avenue**

Karen Kuwica informed the membership that the only item on the agenda this evening will be the discussion of 250 Terminal Avenue and the announcement in the media recently that the facility will remain temporary supportive housing for the next estimated 3 years.

- Joining the meeting (in person) were BC Housing representatives, Heidi Hartman and Jennifer Fox; Violet Hayes - Executive Director of Island Crisis Care (ICC) and Christy Wood, Social Planner for the City of Nanaimo.
- Karen Kuwica then opened the floor for questions from NCA members.
- A BC Housing representative explains that 250 Terminal Avenue will remain temporary shelter with the current trailers on the land to remain under the Provinces Homeless Encampment Action Response Team (HEART) and the Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH) program.
- The goal of the Heart to Hearth program is to bring people currently in the shelter system into housing. Clients are connected to services and then moved on to more permanent housing options.
- This differs from previous residents of 250 Terminal who were moved in from encampments.
- Violet Hayes from Island Crisis Care says that it will be more orderly and not so chaotic as it was moving in residents as a result of the court injunction from Tent City.
- Fred MacDonald, NCA Treasurer wanted to know what happened to the permanent facilities promised for the site that were supposed to be built by 2022 and nothing has been built to date.
- John McEwan, BC Housing representative said that there have been many disruptions to their plans including the pandemic which has stalled

development of 250 Terminal Avenue as priorities were shifted and the change to the Neighbourhood designation in the Newcastle area in the new City Plan.

- President Karen Kuwica wanted to know from BC Housing how long the contract with ICC care was to run the program at 250 Terminal Avenue. Heidi Hartman from BC Housing explained that there wasn't presently a contract signed but when more details became available, she would inform us. A template is in place and the two just need to sit down and discuss the details.
- Sara Smith, BC Housing said that they have been working on a design for the housing for the past 12 months and being very thoughtful in their plans to ensure it fits in with the character of the neighbourhood. The rezoning application is to officially go to City Council in March 2024. BC Housing is committed to holding a public information sessions before it goes to City Council.
- John McEwan, BC Housing said that it would possibly take another 12-18 months to get to the construction phase and then 22-24 months for completion.
- Violet Hayes, ICC stated that the security contract with Paladin is also being terminated. The unit count has been reduced and there are 3 staff members at 250 Terminal 24/7. The feeling is that security is not needed anymore.
- Who to call lists will also be distributed to the community.
- President Karen Kuwica pointed out that the community has suffered trauma as a result of the past chaos at 250 Terminal Ave and that the community needs to know a timeline, the operators, and staff in order to feel safe.
- Sandra Fox, Manager at 250 Terminal Ave. pointed out that there will be staffing at 250 Terminal Avenue including 3 full-time staff at the facility and believes that there will be less complaints from the surrounding community due to the fact that residents will have been in the shelter system for a period of time and ready to be indoors. There will be 50 people at 250 Terminal under the new program.

## Questions from the NCA

1. Will residents sign a program agreement? Yes, they will be including a good neighbour agreement.
2. How many meals will be provided? A full breakfast and dinner will be provided with snack available to residents.
3. Will guests be allowed? No, the no-guest policy will be continued.
4. Are residents allowed to be able to smoke or use substances inside the trailers? No, there is a smoking shelter outside for residents use.
5. Have the burnt out trailers been repaired? All the trailers are currently fully functional including a separate dorm for female residents.
  - It was noted that the neighbourhood has lived with the temporary facility for the last six years and it has changed our community and not for the better. People are now afraid to walk outside, businesses have left, and what has happened in our community is a direct result of 250 Terminal Avenue. She felt that we have been blindsided and not been kept informed, and ideas we have brought forth, have not been taken into consideration.
  - Heidi Hartman from BC Housing said that the CAC's would not be continued because the right people were being placed in 250 Terminal Avenue and that they have been vetted. BC Housing has learned that you can't just place people from camps into housing. There will be seniors in 250 Terminal and young people as well. The new occupants are intended to be of a "lower acuity" than previous occupants capable of transitioning to the next stage of housing which is rent subsidies.
  - NCA Director Darrel Gyorfı wanted to know about public safety. There will be people with addictions using substances in the area. He pointed out that 5-8 years ago there was no drug dealing in the area. He wanted to know if there was going to be a safety security aspect shared with the community and how was Heart and Hearth going to be different?
  - NCA Director Nancy Mitchell asked why weren't any letters regarding the new announcement regarding 250 Terminal Ave distributed to the surrounding neighbourhood. She reported that flyers had been

distributed in a neighbourhood on Townsite instead of Newcastle. BC Housing were unaware of that and would check with the company that distributed the flyers.

- Karen Kuwica also asked if there would be any updates or renovations going on for the new tenants.
- BC Housing said that new furnishing including a new mattresses would be in place for new residents. They also felt that ICC have done a good job of upkeep and minor repairs. BC Housing would also be open to discussing things like exterior beautification such as planters.
- Karen Kuwica then asked about how the 1<sup>st</sup> MOU and the recently changed MOU differ from one another? Social Planner Christy Woods said that the first MOU (2018) has not changed for 6 supportive housing sites to be built in Nanaimo while the new MOU was signed with the intent of creating Heart and Hearth. The first MOU was about sites, while the newer MOU is about the two MOU's working together.
- Karen Kuwica also asked ICC about when the last operational review was done of 250 Terminal. Violet Hayes of ICC said that they are very slow, take about a year, and the last one was done 6 months ago.
- President Karen Kuwica wanted to know in the last 5 years how many people have gone through 250 Terminal Avenue and had been successful in moving on to more permanent housing. She said that the community is curious about outcomes. According to BC Housing they track how long they stay with them and continuity of housing.

**Note:** if you see someone who appears to be suffering from mental health distress call the following numbers. Triage will be performed, services, food or medications will be offered.

**AT nighttime:** call the RCMP at 250-754-2345

**During the day:** call **COR** at 250-741-7645 or **ACT** at 250-739-5705

**Check out our website at:** <https://newcastlecommunityassociation.ca/>

**Next meeting: Tuesday, March 5th, 2024, at 7 PM on Zoom.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM. Submitted by Belinda Climenhaga