

TOWN OF AMHERST
Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee
Minutes

Date: March 21, 2024
Time: 4:30 pm
Location: Council Chambers, Town Hall

Members Present Leon Landry, Councillor, Chair
Dale Fawthrop, Deputy Mayor, Vice Chair
Ashley Legere, Citizen Representative
Donna Farrell, Citizen Representative
L.J. Barquilla, Citizen Representative
Trina Clarke, Citizen Representative
Lynne Welton, Citizen Representative

Members Regrets Melissa Johnson, Citizen Representative

Staff Present Mallory Klooster, Community Well-Being Manager
Natalie LeBlanc, Municipal Clerk
Cindy Brown, Administrative Assistant

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

1.1 Territorial Acknowledgement

The Chair gave the Territorial Acknowledgement.

1.2 Approval of Agenda

The Chair introduced the newest members to the Committee Donna Farrell and Ashley Legere.

Moved By Trina Clarke

Seconded By Lynne Welton

That the agenda of the March 21, 2024 Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee Meeting to be approved as circulated.

Motion Carried

1.3 Acceptance of Minutes - February 22, 2024

The Chair called for any errors or omissions in the minutes. There being none, the minutes of the February 22, 2024 meeting of the Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee were accepted as included in the agenda package.

2. Discussion Items

2.1 *Roundtable Discussions - Landry*

Trina Clarke discussed how the YMCA is working with UNB for a service base count. The full report will be available by the end of April. The preliminary numbers show out of 160 surveys, 147 were from unique individuals. With the breakdown showing that 20% has expressed they have experienced exploitation. The average age is 30 years old, 44% were female, 58% were single, 34% have children and 5% were newcomers.

Councillor Landry wanted to know if the preliminary information shows housing insecurity. Trina Clarke said she does not know until they get the full report.

Donna Farrell said that the surveys that CANU did were only for those who were experiencing some sort of housing insecurity.

Councillor Landry said we will have to wait for the full report but he wanted it on the record about the housing insecurity as the numbers are increasing.

Donna Farrell said that many they are dealing with at CANU are women who are in unsafe situations.

Councillor Fawthrop wanted to know if the report will include Tantramar or just Cumberland. Trina Clarke answered that it was just Cumberland County. Councillor Fawthrop asked if Trina Clarke did a cross reference with the Y's outreach program. Trina Clarke said that they do not get names from the report.

Trina Clarke said that the YMCA is in the process of developing an affordable housing strategy with Happy Cities. It should be ready by late June at the latest. They want to partner with the Town and Cumberland Homelessness and Housing Association to do a similar strategy that is Cumberland wide. Some of the statistics that Happy Cities provided concerning the housing gap is quite alarming.

Councillor Landry said we could extend this conversation of what was discussed with Cumberland Partners, and suggested Trina Clarke introduce that idea to the sub committee. Trina Clarke said yes, she will look into this tomorrow.

Trina Clarke said there is an executive director group that meets once a month and Cumberland Partners, which has representation from DCF, CANU and a broad swath of organizations that are working with individuals under the age of 30 in Cumberland County. Since so much work needs to be done with housing insecurity and youth development it was decided that it would be important that there is a committee that can provide a report to these partners so that they know what is going on. Trina Clarke would like to create a sub committee for those who are doing the work on the ground as well as for the partners who are doing the work at the table.

Ashley Legere said that Cornerstone also has a Happy Cities proposal in for developing and operating affordable housing projects and to develop a strong vision housing strategy which will help acquire future funding projects.

Councillor Landry mentioned that Ashley Legere is the Executive Director for the Cumberland Homelessness and Housing Support Association (Cornerstone).

Councillor Fawthrop said that he heard on the news that the 20's age group is being called the lost generation. They are having trouble finding housing. They graduate from university but they can not find employment in their field.

L.J. Barquilla asked if there are any programs for the working poor to secure housing. Ashley Legere said there are provincial and federal programs but they are not widely advertised.

Trina Clarke said currently no but it could be part of the Strategy. She mentioned how the YMCA helps out in unique situations.

L.J. Barquilla said in their previous community in Morgan, MB there was a home buyer's program. Lynn Welton said you need to make \$100,000.00 a year to be able to afford a mortgage in this area.

Ashley Legere said they are seeing on average 12 people per night who access the emergency shelter with 39 unique people over the year. She said her organization feeds upwards of 50 people per day. Some are coming in from the county, and some are housed but are having issues with food insecurity.

L.J. Barquilla asked if there was a program to promote back yard gardening? They suggested the Town could start one so that the excess can be donated to the food bank. Maybe the Town can assist with tilling people's back yards and give them free seeds.

Donna Farrell said that they (CANU) have received a grant from the Health Board for a pantry for students. They are working with farmers to develop a cooperative to assist.

Councillor Fawthrop said that the food bank is being used by more and more people.

Councillor Landry indicated the community garden is a tool to engage the public to get them to grow their own food.

Donna Farrell said it is Maggie's Place who administers the community gardens and has free seeds.

Councillor Landry mentioned that organizations are struggling to get more volunteers. L.J. Barquilla suggested a tax credit program, like for an example the fire fighters who get tax receipts for volunteering.

Trina Clarke said we are not allowed to do that but we could advocate for this change.

Ashley Legere said with Habitat for Humanity you have to put in so many hours before you can get a home.

Councillor Landry said he will put this in his report to Council for Monday, March 25, 2024.

Moved By L.J. Barquilla

Seconded By Ashley Legere

That the Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee recommends that Council direct the CAO to have staff do a report regrading a tax credit that considers doing volunteer work as a donation, as this could encourage volunteerism.

Motion Carried

2.2 *Items for Joint Committee Workshop - Landry*

Councillor Landry discussed the informal workshop for the 3 Social Equity Committees (Accessibility, IDE and PRAC). The workshop will be held on Wednesday, April 17th at 6 p.m. at the Community Credit Union Business Innovation Center at 5 Ratchford Street. If the committee members have any concerns, suggestions or topics you would like to suggest please email Sharon Bristol or Mallory Klooster.

2.3 *Strategic Plan Report Update 2024 - Klooster*

Mallory Klooster presented the Strategic Plan Report update. She discussed the short- and long-term goals of the Action Plans and the accomplishments. Mallory talked about an upcoming project with the Amherst Regional High School.

2.4 *ARHS AHEAD Social Justice and Wellness Day - Klooster*

Mallory Klooster discussed the Amherst High Educational Awareness Day on May 17th that is being held by the Amherst Regional High School. This student-led conference aims to provide students with diverse perspectives and enriching experiences by having a variety of different speakers present. Staff and Committee Members have been invited to attend.

Ashley Legere said she has comic books and colouring books that can be handed out at the event. She said this event should be added as an item for the Joint Committee Workshop.

2.5 *Update on Basic Income - Landry*

Councillor Landry updated the committee regarding their motion they sent to Council for Basic Income Guarantee. It will be voted on at the Regular Council meeting March 25, 2024.

3. *Next Meeting - April 25, 2024 at 4:30 PM*

4. *Adjournment*

The Chair adjourned the meeting.

Natalie LeBlanc
Municipal Clerk

Councillor Leon Landry
Chair