


COUNCIL AGENDA/INFORMATION			
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13

DISTRICT OF WEST VANCOUVER
750 – 17TH STREET, WEST VANCOUVER, BC V7V 3T3

COUNCIL REPORT

Date: December 16, 2008 File: 0180-50
 From: Chair, Pamela Goldsmith-Jones, North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group
 Subject: **North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group Status Report to the Partners, September 2008**

Purpose

To provide member organizations with an update on the mandate and activities of the North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group: September 2006 – September 2008.

1.0 Background

1.1 History

The North Shore Substance Abuse Task Force (SATF) was established in October 2000 as a strategic response by all three municipalities to manage the increasing and complex health, safety, social and economic impacts of substance abuse on the North Shore.

The SATF worked on drafting a substance abuse strategy in partnership with community organizations, service providers and the public. The strategy's fundamental philosophy was that substance abuse is not solely a moral or criminal issue but also a health issue. The strategy was based on a four pillar approach to addressing substance abuse which included prevention, treatment, enforcement and harm reduction. The Strategy was formally adopted by the District of North Vancouver, City of North Vancouver, District of West Vancouver, Bowen Island and Lions Bay Councils in 2002.

Since that time, the SATF has been successful in its commitment to collaborate with community partners to address the problem of substance abuse. There is co-operation among public decision makers from the Councils of the District of North Vancouver, the City of North Vancouver, the District of West Vancouver, Bowen Island, and Lions Bay, and from the two North Shore School Districts, the North Vancouver RCMP, West Vancouver Police, Vancouver Coastal Health, Ministry of Children and Family Development and representatives from Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish First Nations.

Date: December 16, 2008
From: Chair, Pamela Goldsmith-Jones, North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group
Subject: **North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group Status Report to the Partners**

In the fall of 2006, members of the SATF participated in a comprehensive strategic planning session to review the mandate of the committee and to plan for future direction. A revised mission was developed and the name changed from the North Shore Substance Abuse Task Force to the North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group (SAWG).

Mission

The North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group acts as a catalyst to bring together those in the community who are working to reduce the impact and incidence of substance abuse. It is a forum for exchanging ideas, coordinating efforts and supporting community based initiatives. The Leaders that make up the North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group recognize the opportunity and responsibility they have to advocate for solutions, and to raise community awareness with community partners.

Mandate

Advocacy, Collaboration and Leadership.

Membership

The Working Group is comprised of the following members or their designate:

- One Council member from each of the five North Shore Municipalities
- One first Nation Leader from the Squamish First Nation Band
- One First Nation Leader from the Tsleil Waututh Band
- One Police Chief from the North Vancouver RCMP
- One Police Chief from the West Vancouver Police Department
- One RCMP member from Bowen Island
- One School Trustee from School District #44
- One School Trustee from School District #45
- One Director from Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (Mental Health and Addictions)
- One Director from Vancouver Coast Health Authority (Public Health and Prevention)

2.0 Policy

2.1 The North Shore Substance Abuse Task Force (SAFT) adopted a Four Pillar Substance Abuse Strategy in 2002. The organizations that participated in the Strategy's preparation were:

- City of North Vancouver
- District of North Vancouver
- District of West Vancouver
- Bowen Island Municipality

Date: December 16, 2008
From: Chair, Pamela Goldsmith-Jones, North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group
Subject: **North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group Status Report to the Partners**

- Village of Lions Bay
- North Shore Health Region
- North Vancouver School District (No. 44)
- West Vancouver School District (No. 45)
- Squamish Nation
- Tsleil-Waututh Nation

3.0 Analysis

3.1 Discussion

As a result of the projects (outlined below) and collaboration undertaken by all members of the North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group (SAWG), communication and relationships across the community and among key decision makers have strengthened considerably. Coordinated efforts are now the norm.

At the 2006 strategic planning session, revisions were made to the mission statement and terms of reference and a two year Work Plan was developed to address current needs. The Work Plan focused on six priority areas and task groups were established for each of these areas:

- Task Group One: Documentation of the Problem/Statistical Information Gathering
- Task Group Two: Mapping of North Shore Substance Abuse/Misuse Resources
- Task Group Three: Establishment of a 'Wellness Centre' for the North Shore
- Task Group Four: Regular Communication to the Community
- Task Group Five: Development of a Substance Abuse Prevention Plan
- Task Group Six: Identification and Response to Structural Barriers to Address Substance Abuse on the North Shore

Members of the SAWG have dedicated their time to serving on the above task groups and attending quarterly meetings of the whole Working Group.

3.2 Highlights of Accomplishments 2006-2008:

Vancouver Coastal Health – Leadership and Commitment

The most significant development over the last two years has been the commitment of Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) to participate on the SAWG and to play a leadership role in addressing substance abuse on the North Shore. VCH addresses substance abuse through its integrated service delivery model, action prevention team, outpatient services, day programming, and other community based partnerships. VCH is currently planning for withdrawal management services and a supportive recovery home for the North Shore.

Date: December 16, 2008
From: Chair, Pamela Goldsmith-Jones, North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group
Subject: **North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group Status Report to the Partners**

Additional accomplishments by the SAWG include:

Development of a Directory of Substance Abuse Support Services

This directory includes a comprehensive listing of support services related to substance abuse on the North Shore.

Documentation of the Problem

The Working Group compiled statistical information from a variety of sources that details the nature and magnitude of substance abuse on the North Shore.

Squamish Nation Wellness Centre Proposal

The Squamish Nation and other partners are investigating the opportunity to establish a Wellness Centre for North Shore residents which would be built on Squamish land. The intention of the Wellness Centre would be based on First Nations healing principles and open to aboriginals and non aboriginals from the North Shore community.

Formation of Wellness Centre Steering Committee

A new North Shore community based Wellness Centre steering committee has been created to move the wellness centre concept from the responsibility of the SAWG to the broader community. Independent of the SAWG, this committee will complete a feasibility study and business case to explore the viability of establishing a Wellness Centre. Further details will be forthcoming once the feasibility study has been completed.

Completion of the North Shore Substance Abuse Prevention Plan

A new North Shore community based prevention committee, made up of community service providers, health, police and municipal staff, have worked collaboratively to develop a strategic plan with a focus on enhancing the coordination of substance abuse prevention services for youth across the North Shore.

Regular Speaker Sessions on Substance Abuse Issues

Guest speakers regularly attend the SAWG meetings to present on key community issues relating to substance abuse. Information from these speaker sessions has been invaluable in identifying opportunities and gaps in service delivery; in educating SAWG members on issues facing the community; and in learning about approaches other communities have used to address substance abuse issues.

Presentations have included:

- The Summerville Foundation's initiative to establish a treatment centre in BC;
- Watari: A non-profit organization offering youth, family and community service programs in Vancouver that hopes to establish a North Shore presence;

Date: December 16, 2008
From: Chair, Pamela Goldsmith-Jones, North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group
Subject: **North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group Status Report to the Partners**

- School Aged Children and Youth Substance Use Prevention (SACY): a program offered through the Vancouver School Board in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health Authority;
- Turning Point Recovery Society, a non-profit agency that provides a supportive, abstinence based residential environment recovery program.

3.3 Next Steps / Future Directions

The SAWG have come a long way from its first formal meeting with VCH representatives and Chief Operating Officer, Ida Goodreau, several years ago. All partners recognize that substance abuse and health care are closely linked and that solutions require collaboration. The North Shore has approached the issue of substance abuse collectively and assumed shared responsibility in finding workable solutions. The result is a community that is now closely linked with each other. These linkages are strong and sustainable for the future.

In the spirit of collaboration, the recommendation is to move forward by continuing the Working Group's efforts and developing a new work plan that will continue to address the issues relating to substance abuse on the North Shore.

The Leaders who make up the North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group recognize the opportunity and responsibility they have to advocate for solutions, and to raise community awareness and include community partners. The Working Group will re-convene in January 2009, with a facilitated discussion to review its mandate and membership, and to strategize for the future. The District of North Vancouver has agreed to Chair the Working Group in 2009.

4.0 Social Implications

The problems that arise from substance abuse can be devastating for individuals and families and can lead to homelessness, poverty and family breakdown. Members of the community grappling with issues related to substance abuse require support and resources in their home community to address the problem. The SAWG has advocated for these important services and encouraged cooperation amongst key service providers, funders and their respective community partners. It has provided an important venue for public engagement on issues related to substance abuse on the North Shore.

Date: December 16, 2008
From: Chair, Pamela Goldsmith-Jones, North Shore Substance Abuse Working Group
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5.0 Financial Implications

The SAWG has two accounts which the City of North Vancouver manages: an implementation account and a project account. As of October 2008 the 'implementation' account had a balance of \$22,927.61. This account has been funded over the years by a variety of organizations including municipalities and the school districts. The 'project' account, which consists of the monies originally contributed by Vancouver Coastal Health, has a balance of \$34,912.56. The total funds currently in the 'implementation' and 'project' accounts are \$57,840.17.

A plan for using the existing funds will be addressed as part of the strategic planning session in January. A funding agreement will be developed and put in place to formalize the contributions expected from partners for the future.

Author: _____

Concurrence
(optional) _____