

Priorities Committee Meeting_Jan24_2017

Ward 4 Councillor Report

Elected Official: Carla Howatt

Boards and Committees:*Inter-city Forum on Social Policy*

April 8, 2016

June 10, 2016

Sept. 23, 2016

Each meeting, a representative from various provincial departments is invited. The Forum decides on questions and areas of discussion prior to them arriving so a fulsome discussion can occur. One of the more recent attendees was Susan Taylor, Assistant Deputy Minister for Human Services, Community Services and Supports. One of the areas discussed was a desire by the municipalities to coordinate with the province in the area of low-income applications. The province is currently reviewing Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) and Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) application processes and there was feedback by the municipalities to the department that this may be an ideal time to work with the municipalities. An idea of having common applications for all municipalities (not the same service level, but the same application process) in order to make it easier for those moving from one municipality to another.

I have been talking with Edmonton Councillor Bev Esslinger regarding the potential for a more regional approach to some of our social issues. These talks are ongoing and may occur in conjunction with other regions across the province.

One of our forum members is a representative from Human Services, John Thompson, who is the Executive Director of Strategic Policy, Human Services. He often brings information and insight into what is happening at the provincial level. In addition, there are updates and reports from Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA), Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Family & Community Support Services Association of Alberta (FCSSAA, association for FCSS').

Other topics of discussion and exchange of ideas include payday loans, Syrian refugees, poverty reduction, social housing, low income transit etc.

Capital Region Board Housing Committee

With all the housing needs assessments completed for each region, the committee is now turning to the next step, which is creating a standardized sub-regional housing planning model and then the plans themselves. To this end, the committee hosted a Housing Needs Assessment Workshop on May 27, 2016.

A draft Housing Planning Model was a result of the workshop and it will be considered by the committee in 2017.

Heartland Housing Foundation Board

The Heartland Housing Foundation (HHF) board has done a lot of work around systems, processes and procedures this past year and will continue into 2017. Some of this work is around emergency preparedness, risk assessments, etc.

The building of a new facility in Sherwood Park has also taken up a lot of time and resources throughout the year, as well as planning for potential future builds. In January, the Board will be spending a day deciding on the strategic direction of the organization and determining priorities.

HHF continues to explore innovative ideas on collaborating and working with not only Strathcona County and the City of Fort Saskatchewan, but other areas in the Capital Region on areas of efficiencies. A housing workshop was held by the HHF sub-committee and was well received and attended by community groups.

Professional Development:

Augustana University in Camrose is hosting a five part rural sustainability program. The five parts include Social, Cultural, Environmental, Economics and Governance. I currently have one part remaining to finish the series – Governance. While I originally signed up for this series because I was interested in learning more about rural sustainability, I have discovered that the lessons learned are applicable all over. I have a large package full of the case studies and course material for anyone interested.

Cultural Sustainability

This course was of particular interest as it looked at culture as a holistic and integral part of a community, and of all the other pillars. Culture is defined not as only museums and art galleries – although they are important – but rather as how a community defines themselves and how others define the community. It is closely related in some ways to identity.

How governments can integrate cultural sustainability within policies was also something the course placed a lot of emphasis on.

As usual, this course had an emphasis on the planning model, case studies and sharing amongst participants.

MAJOR TAKEAWAY: We can and should be intentional in developing our identity.

Social Sustainability

Several case studies were presented as well as an academic model on social sustainability. The emphasis on this area was in a holistic, community based approach and aligning the social sustainability framework with community goals, values and assets. Areas covered also included social capital, asset mapping and how to measure or use social indicators within the planning model.

This course was particularly well timed as I attended it a few months before we began our own social sustainability framework process.

MAJOR TAKEAWAY: Our social sustainability framework was out of date, not being followed and did not align with our strategic plan.

Public Engagement

The 6th Annual Summit on Public Consultation & Engagement was held in Toronto on December 5-7, 2016.

A wide range of topics and presenters highlighted case studies, best practices and challenges within the public consultation world. Some of the topics included:

- How the Federal Government is Engaging: Implications on Your Public Consultation
- Stimulate the Silent Majority
- How to Develop a Rich Culture of Community Relations to Deliver a Superior Engagement Experience.
- Collaborative Internal Engagement for Meaningful Public Consultation – Municipality of York Transit
- Creating The Downtown Almonte Heritage Conservation District
- Addressing Privacy Concerns to Avoid Intrusive Consultation Practices

One of the keynote speakers was from Kinder Morgan who spoke about advancing large scale projects.

Again, if anyone is interested, I have all the materials from the conference which provide detailed information.

MAJOR TAKEAWAY: A lot of great tips and ideas, but also the realization that we are, overall, doing a decent job with engagement and consultation. This is an area many people and organizations struggle with in this information age.