

## **Safer Community Committee (SCC)**

**Meeting 1 - July 27, 2023**

**1:00 PM on Zoom**

### **Members in attendance:**

Kathryn Adams, Meaghan C., Leigh Chapman, Naureen Choudhry, Laurence DeWolfe, Sara Ehrhardt, Nigel Fick, Derek Finkle, Emily Hill, Rebecca Ho, Aparna Kajenthira, Ashley McPherson, Elana Nayvelt, Andrea Nickel, Jennifer Orenstein, Kim O'Toole, Angela Robertson, Ola Skudlarska, Edward Speicher, Christiane Tetreault, Mike Wilson.

### **Meeting support attendees:**

Jason Altenberg (Convener - SRCHC CEO), Dana Granofsky (Facilitator of SCC), Julie Grgar (SCC Administrative Support)

### **Members absent:**

Mike Hayles, Gillian Kolla, Scott McKean.

### **1. Welcome and introductions**

Dana Granofsky is as an experienced mediator, facilitator, and process designer, responsible for the design of the Safer Community Committee (SCC) who will act as the Facilitator and chair the meetings. Those attending the meeting, other than those in supporting roles were required to fully participate in the process of the SCC and there were no observers present.

Membership on the SCC is complete, pending the agreement of SCC members. The SCC will have long conversations to complete its work and requires a size to facilitate meaningful conversations between its members. Consequently, it is hoped that each member is able to attend every meeting.

The SCC has come together for a particular purpose in a unique manner. This initial meeting provides the opportunity for a new avenue in this broader conversation that SCC members are entering together.

South Riverdale Community Health Centre (SRCHC) is the Convener of the Safer Community Committee. The SCC is:

- not a standing committee; nor is it a formal governance body that exist or that will continue in perpetuity.
- a conversation of neighbours and critical perspectives that has struck a table and put it into the hands of a third party neutral, so that SRCHC is a participant alongside with all of the other SCC participants.
- intended to create and hold a space for genuine problem-solving as neighbours and some of that is reflected in its Terms of Reference (TOR).

SRCHC advised that it invited the Facilitator to lead this conversation to recognize that external parties to the Centre have concerns, ideas and solutions that need to be heard. These external stakeholders hold different pieces of information required to develop solutions to the complex work that needs to be done.

Should an SCC member need to step down, they cannot send a substitute in their stead. Members were added on a first come-first served basis. A waiting list for potential future SCC members has been

started. Any additions will be added from that wait list on a first come-first served capacity. Member feedback on that topic would be discussed during the terms of reference.

The goals for this first meeting:

1. Get to know the members at this table. The SCC, in its informal nature, is intended to enable problem-solving and develop understanding of the different perspectives in the community.
2. Agreement for the Terms of Reference (TOR) which will be reviewed to:
  - ✓ to layout the rules of engagement for participation;
  - ✓ to determine what its participants will endeavour to accomplish together;
  - ✓ how SCC members will treat each through that engagement process.

Members were asked to be concise when introducing themselves so that all members had time to participate, and identify their name, their affiliation, and raise a critically important issue for SCC to include in its work.

Before proceeding, members agreed to the recording of the meeting for the exclusive purpose of creating meeting summary notes, after which the recording would be deleted.

Members introduced themselves and advised of various categories they represent in the community. They identified areas of critical importance for the SCC's work:

1. Safety and security for the community as a whole:
  - The need for all community members to feel personally safe
  - Children and their particular safety needs as younger minors or youth:
    - finding or touching items they find: drug, needles, and other drug paraphernalia;
    - pedestrian traffic to and from school or daycare;
    - what they may observe in the community with parents or independently i.e. overdoses and drug use
  - the safety of other vulnerable persons in the community
  - the safety of local employees in schools, organizations, and businesses
2. Communication concerns or topics:
  - Ensure community engagement through communication to the SCC and from the SCC to all relevant community members and in the future with SRCHC and other stakeholders:
    - Local residents,
    - parents,
    - local businesses,
    - local schools
    - the community as a whole
  - reporting of incidents directly to Toronto Police Services and developing a relationship with TPS for police to respond accordingly to community and safety concerns
  - communication between SRCHC and Toronto Police Services and related responsibilities
  - focussing on shared values and interests for change and improvement
3. The continuation of safe injection site services to prevent deaths due to the opioid crisis and ensuring that people who use drugs have adequate local services
4. Change that:
  - Provides tangible solutions to the relevant and local problems instead of overarching issues
  - Will lead to improvement or betterment for all community members
  - Will assist in interaction with clients of the safe injection site
5. Clarity and information about accountabilities of SRCHC and other organizations or stakeholders to the community

6. Ensuring the private property of the church is cleaner and safer along with nearby municipally owned space that is not properly maintained
7. The relevant data and information in making an informed decision:
  - Around the health centre and compared to other areas of the city and/or safe injection sites
  - What other safe injection services are experiencing and what they are doing to resolve problems
  - What SRCHC has done with respect to managing concerns and issues requested by the community, required to operate the service, and in relation to reports from the City and other service sites.

A request was made to turn on Closed Captions for the Zoom for that meeting.

SRCHC staff supporting the Safer Community Committee were also in attendance, but are not members of the SCC. Their role is to provide resources, and administrative support.

## **2. Task and Terms of Reference**

### **The Task**

SCC members will provide a brief biography of who they are, in their own words that can be publicly shared with the community. Members who may have concerns about sharing their full identity should speak to the Facilitator to help determine an alternative form of public identification.

The community has experienced a trauma. Some members of the SCC were actively involved in concerns prior to the tragic death on July 7, 2023. The SCC cannot underestimate the significance of Karolina Huebner-Makurat's death in bringing this group together, including SRCHC, and in mobilizing participants in a way that may have been desired for a long time. This momentum is a real chance to make improvements and change.

Reoccurring themes of critical importance identified by members included the importance of:

- The need for critical services for everyone in the community
- The need for community safety, especially for people who are most vulnerable, including children and people who are marginalized

There appears to be agreement on the above two items. How will the SCC achieve this? What can the community put in place to protect and look after all of the members of the community and co-exist together in a way that is secure and feels secure? SCC members have demonstrated eagerness for that task but may need to work together in new ways to arrive at local, tangible and actionable solutions.

## **3. Terms of Reference (TOR)**

The Terms of Reference is a critical guideline of what the SCC will do and how it will work together to achieve its goals. Amendments to the draft will be made and approved by the SCC members.

The terms were drafted in advance, by the Facilitator, based on her experience and professional expertise as a mediator and process designer to assist this particular committee. SCC members will determine the final version. The purpose of the draft was to help facilitate a timely process to develop the terms, but they must be agreeable for all the SCC members.

### **Composition**

Some SCC members fit into one category while others fit into multiple categories. A cross-representation of different viewpoints from throughout the community is desirable to test ideas and develop actionable solutions by accounting for different types of interests and perspectives.

## **Quorum**

Quorum will help to ensure various perspectives are represented at all meetings and help members arrive at decisions together. It ensures discussions and results are reasonably balanced, because the various groups are represented in providing feedback.

Participants who have their cameras off and microphones off on the virtual meeting were asked to respond using emoji's, or the chat line; otherwise, silence would be interpreted as agreement.

## **Mandate**

The mandate is critical. The SCC will identify the safety and security challenges in the community and the factors that contribute to those challenges. Who is accountable for what?

To achieve its mandate the SCC must recognize both the symptoms and the causes of the issues, and create alignment on what needs to be addressed.

The SCC will generate recommendations for a range of actors. The Centre is one actor and there may well be recommendations that are immediately useful for the community actionable by the Centre. However, there are other actors who have both an interest and levers that are relevant for the impact on community safety and the SCC is not being limited by these terms. This is why the Centre is just one of many equal participants on the SCC. It would be desirable to take a community view, and determine what needs to happen to direct recommendations to the full range of actors who have a part to play in making things better.

## **Timeline**

The SCC is anticipated to require four meetings to come to its conclusions. The SCC will review its progress and how that progress feels. The will help ensure some momentum. The timeline attempts to balance sufficient time to complete work, while working quickly and concisely to achieve results and share them with the community.

## **Convener's responsibilities**

In convening the SCC, South Riverdale Community Health Centre is making a commitment to operate transparently and post SCC information publicly for visibility into the process of the SCC for the purpose of:

- ✓ ensuring community is aware there will be recommendations and understands how recommendations were reached;
- ✓ disseminating the recommendations;
- ✓ championing the recommendations to the appropriate bodies.

Some recommendations may be parties not represented on the SCC and may be out of the control of SRCHC to implement. The commitment SRCHC is making, is to ensure the recommendations go to the appropriate parties and that they actively champion the recommendations to the relevant parties.

## **Committee member responsibilities**

The members' responsibilities proposed are designed to help the mandate for the SCC to make the most of its time.

It is important for members to advise of absence in advance of meetings to the Facilitator, or provide regrets in advance of meetings:

- ✓ to ensure the committee is not waiting for participants
- ✓ to ensure the SCC progresses within the available time frame

- ✓ to ensure quorum at meetings

Members may miss a meeting. However, it will be assumed a member has stepped down from the committee, if a member misses two consecutive meetings without providing advance notice, and that member's participation will be removed from the quorum.

### **Facilitator responsibilities**

The Facilitator's responsibilities were reviewed. The intent is for those responsibilities is to:

- ✓ help ensure the process runs smoothly
- ✓ respond appropriately to SCC members
- ✓ establish an open manner that helps participants feel confident in their ability to express their opinions, share their experiences, and productively contribute to a productive end result

Once the final recommendation report is drafted on behalf of the SCC, the Facilitator will receive approval from the members before the report is final or made public

### **Committee Conduct**

The significance of how committee members treat each other was emphasized. They will be required to do more than getting to know each other. All SCC members are participating because they care about the safety and security of everyone.

Members were asked not to attribute specific comments from the meetings to specific individuals, the same as the meeting summaries, to ensure full participation and the ability to speak freely by all members.

### **Summaries/Recording**

Summaries will allow the SCC to:

- ✓ share information
- ✓ coordinate with other existing committees
- ✓ publicly share the summaries to advise of the work being done.

Summaries will not attribute specific statements to individuals, unless it is relevant to attribute the information to an expert or resource person in attendance. This will enable SCC members to freely express their opinions. Meeting summaries will be reviewed by the SCC to ensure they are an accurate reflection of how participants understood the conversation, prior to their public release, with an opportunity to respond to the summary.

Prior to recording each meeting, attendees will provide their consent. Participants may change their mind about being recorded. Recordings will only be used to prepare the meeting summaries, after which the recordings will be deleted.

### **Public Reporting**

There is media interest and coverage of that will likely follow the SCC. Members are asked to advise the SCC if they are contacted by media regarding its work. Members who are active in the community, or as a function of their job or position, may need to make a comment to the media. Inquiries directly about the SCC should be directed them to the committee.

The SCC is a work-in-progress. Consequently, members were asked that they not go public with the discussions of the group, to allow ideas to gel and allow for time to develop alignment on solutions. It will facilitate everyone's input for the work members are trying to do together.

The strength of the final SCC recommendations will depend on the alignment and agreement of its members. Currently, the dialogue is polarized and there cannot be progress under those conditions. Stagnation is the last thing any one involved wants. The power of this committee will come from being able to work together to represent a range of voices that can agree upon solutions. This will take some time. This is why it is important to keep these conversations within the Committee until the members have had a chance to develop and work on that alignment. The SCC cannot prevent anyone from speaking to the media in representing themselves, but members are asked not to act as a spokesperson for the SCC.

### **Decision-making**

In reviewing the decision-making process for the terms, it is hoped that there will be no votes required due to alignment of members. If votes are necessary, the SCC will strive for a higher standard than 50% plus one.

A 60% threshold was suggested so each decision included agreement from a spectrum of varied members representing the community. No specific segment of members on the SCC will be able to overwhelm the other community groups represented. 60% requires at least some of portion of the multiple viewpoints from each segment to agree and produce a recommendation.

Additionally:

- It is preferred that there is agreement on recommendations with no vote, as the degree of alignment will power recommendations.
- Perfect consensus may not be a feasible target, but the objective is for recommendations that all the participants can be content with.
- There is a caveat of a minority report. Even if an overwhelming majority of SCC members agree on a particular recommendation, and only a few members strenuously disagree, there must be space for opposing opinions to keep all community representatives at the table, allow for the sharing of opinions, and provide for transparent thinking. Minority reports should not be used across the board – the more it is used the less impactful the recommendations. It is an opportunity for a few members to disagree in specific areas and explain more about their rationale to those who receive the report.

Additional information about recommendations:

1. It is possible that a recommendation goes forward to the wrong body, or to the right body, which is not feasible and has a low chance of actually being acted upon

The reason why you are all around the table is to bake into the conversation informing one another about that feasibility, is to decrease the likelihood that kind of recommendation receives support. The intent in bringing different perspectives together is to minimize the likelihood of disappointment, because the recommendations are not fully-informed by the reality of the actors who will take them forward.

2. Potential for a minority report:

- A recommendation may go forward that an SCC member disagrees with or cannot support due to professional obligations.
- It is intended to provide a release valve, so there is a space to issue a response to raise further considerations, add greater insight and nuance to the recommendations,
- For members to be able to participate in the conversation and be a party to the recommendations without necessarily needing to endorse every one.

## Discussion and feedback

The SCC will require appropriate inputs to make informed decisions, opinions and understand the situation, which is not always easy to understand. The Facilitator will try to obtain information requested by SCC members to assist them in making informed opinions, decisions, and recommendations.

Recommended or requested reports for reading and input:

- An existing report from Queen West CHC along with updated information from Parkdale-Queen West CHC for what they are currently experiencing. Fortunately, the author of that report, Angela Robertson is a member of the SCC and can help inform the committee.
- An updated report from SRCHC on what has been implemented to resolve issues; what has worked and what has not worked, so the SCC can develop recommendations
- *Staff report for action on Implementing SIS in Toronto* - June 16 2016 HL13.2

There was a police inspection of Queen Street East Presbyterian Church (QSEPC) and SRCHC. Copies of the formal report were requested. The Church agreed to have a Safety Walk around its property directed by Constable Jon Little and two other Neighbourhood Police Officers which resulted in recommendations regarding lighting, signage, removing vegetation and other barriers to visibility. QSEPC has started implementing the recommendations for the east and west sides of the church. There was also a discussion about gates and fences on the east side of the property, but no decision has been made. Change has already been observed in the level and type of activity in the courtyard between QSEPC and SRCHC. However, some of that activity has simply relocated to the area west of the church. Property on the west side of the church is currently owned by the City, but responsibility for maintenance has fallen on the church. The church is not aware of any formal study or report as a result of the Safety Walk. SRCHC also conducted a Safety Walk with Constable Little.

Information will also be requested from 55 Division on crime prevention with the endeavour to include some statistics and figures.

Members also wanted to know:

- What information is measurable?
- If there are communication challenges between SRCHC and the TPS?
- Is there existing research or environmental scans of other safe injection sites in Toronto/Ontario/Canada/Globally to compare the issues faced and mitigation strategies implemented?
- If data collection is available throughout the City of Toronto?
- How the safe injection site is funded, and its staffing, client numbers, and information on efficacy to date, and how it operates on the inside.

The Committee agreed with the draft Terms of Reference and an updated version will be provided for their approval.

A resident active in the immediate community and living on the street adjacent to the Centre advised:

- There is a local group that has collected data from the community using a Google form including 350 resident responses since May 2023 and that collection process is continuing.
- From that input, there seems to be an equal split of incidents reported between when the safe injection service is open or closed, with almost no difference.
- The impact on residents who live in the immediate area to the safe injection service (within a few streets), is different than the effects on residents who live a few blocks away from the site.

- In the resident's opinion, the consequences of the safe injection site to the local residents is not what was anticipated at the inception of the service.

### **3. Community Information**

There are currently outreach exercises that are completed or underway to provide for bringing input from community members and organizations. What are folks saying and hearing so that the SCC can be informed by those conversations?

### **4. Follow up to Meeting 1**

Follow up and reminders:

- Members will receive a poll offering different times to schedule the upcoming meetings.
- Members will submit a 3 to 5 sentence biography in their own words for publication.
- There will be greater direction and orientation for upcoming meetings:
  - ✓ to understand the purpose and goal of future meetings and conversations
  - ✓ for members to be able to come prepared to meetings
  - ✓ for members to be able to advise the Facilitator of what they require to prepare and participate

The Facilitator thanked the members for their participation to the start of their conversation together.