



WOMEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

April 22, 2025

A special meeting of the Women's Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, April 22, 2025, at 5:32 pm, via electronic means.

PRESENT: Ellie Lawson, Vice-Chair
Morrell Andrews
Alaina Chun
Katsy Concepcion
Nazma Lee
Serena Mohammed
Amy Robichaud
Olga Scherbyna

ABSENT: Alida Oegema Thomas, Chair (Leave of Absence)
Avani Patel (Leave of Absence)
Molly Needham
Shirin Shushtarian

ALSO PRESENT: Commissioner Angela Haer, Park Board Liaison

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE: Cassia Nasralla, Meeting Coordinator

WELCOME

The Vice-Chair acknowledged we are on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Peoples. We thank them for having cared for this land and look forward to working with them in partnership as we continue to build this great city together.

Leave of Absence Requests

MOVED by Morrell Andrews
SECONDED by Alaina Chun

THAT the Women's Advisory Committee approve leaves of absence for Alida Oegema Thomas and Avani Patel, for this meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

1. Motion Regarding Advisory Committees Report

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Prior to the item commencing, Vice-Chair Ellie Lawson relinquished the Chair to Nazma Lee in order to move the motion, and did not resume the role of Chair until after the completion of the item.

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MOVED BY Ellie Lawson
SECONDED BY Serena Mohammed

WHEREAS

1. City of Vancouver civic agencies are volunteer bodies established and appointed by Council to convey community perspectives to Council while advising on City priorities, projects, and initiatives, or to serve statutory functions as outlined in relevant by-laws or terms of reference;
2. Civic agencies are essential to the City's public engagement efforts, and are often asked to provide early and ongoing feedback on specific projects;
3. Civic agencies allow residents to develop civic knowledge and give back to their communities, and are a crucial part of the City's accountability to and engagement with residents;
4. Civic agencies have been shaping City priorities for nearly a century—beginning with the Vancouver City Planning Commission (1926–1952), expanding in the 1970s with advisory bodies like the Bicycle Advisory Committee and special advisory committees on disabilities and seniors, and continuing to evolve toward more inclusive and diverse public engagement;
5. As of part of this larger body of Advisory Committee, the Women's Advisory Committee (WAC) advises Council and staff on enhancing access and inclusion for women and girls to fully participate in City services and civic life;
6. The Committee specifically exists to elevate the voices of people who have historically been, and continue to be, marginalized, and to ensure that the unique needs, concerns, and perspectives of the community are meaningfully and thoughtfully incorporated into municipal decision-making;
7. Women, girls, and gender-diverse people have historically faced, and continue to face, barriers to meaningful civic participation, and some have experienced outright bias and oppression;
8. While there is merit in the need to ensure that advisory committees provide more focused engagement and feedback, it is vital to ensure the continuation of distinct advisory committees like this one, which can exist alongside other committee structures;

9. There are alternative ways to improve the functioning of advisory committees without removing the benefits they provide, such as clear mandate letters, enhanced meeting processes, and cross-committee collaboration;
10. The potential elimination of this Committee in favour of a different structure would diminish the voices and lived experiences of Women, girls, and gender-diverse people in municipal decision-making, reversing decades of progress in increasing civic participation among marginalized communities;
11. Including a handful of women and gender-diverse people within a larger, broader body, such as a Community Advisory Assembly, or only within committees focused exclusively on specific topics or Council priorities, would fail to fully capture the diverse experiences of women and gender-diverse people, while also substantially reducing their opportunity to speak;
12. This Committee provides more in-depth and technical feedback than would be possible as part of a larger body, with staff over the years stating that the Committee's feedback is extensive and allows staff to demonstrate meaningful engagement with women, girls, and gender-diverse people;
13. Dedicated, distinct committees like this one are essential for providing focused feedback on City policies directly affecting women, girls, and gender-diverse people, including the Women's Equity Strategy (2018–2028), the Equity Framework, and the Childcare Strategy;
14. Dedicated, distinct committees like this one also address gender-based violence, MMIWG2S+, safety across city spaces, and equitable access to housing, childcare, and opportunities for women and gender-diverse people;
15. Because gender-based (GBA+) considerations are vital to all aspects of city planning, gender analysis and engagement are necessary across a broad scope of municipal decision-making;
16. The October 9th Council motion on advisory committee structures (Minutes, page 13) suggests that committees may be placing more emphasis on operations rather than policy, but in practice, these two areas are deeply interconnected, as operational matters directly impact the lived experiences of women, girls, and gender-diverse people, and often signal areas where policy improvements are necessary;
17. Given historical experiences of stigma and marginalization, many women and gender-diverse people feel safer sharing their lived experiences and perspectives as part of a separate group of like individuals, whereas participation in a majoritized group could limit open and frank discussion;
18. This Committee gives members sufficient time and space to bring forward ideas and concerns that may not be apparent to a majoritized group, ensuring that issues affecting women and gender-diverse people are not overlooked;
19. Over the years, these Committees have established strong relationships with Council members and City staff, which have facilitated meaningful engagement

and policy improvements, and such relationships would be disrupted if the Committee were dissolved; and

20. These Committees plays a critical role in bridging the gap between City Council, municipal staff, and marginalized communities, ensuring that policies and services are informed by lived experiences and clearly conveyed to the community.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Women's Advisory Committee recommends that Council:

- i. Ensure the Committee remains a distinct, dedicated body that provides focused, expert feedback on issues affecting women, girls, and gender-diverse people;
- ii. Ensure that any changes to advisory committee structures do not diminish the representation of equity-denied communities, including women and gender-diverse people, in municipal decision-making;
- iii. Recognize that specialized advisory committees like this one play a vital role in democratic participation beyond voting, and should continue to serve as a means for historically marginalized communities to engage with civic processes; and,
- iv. Reaffirm an ongoing commitment to working with Civic Agencies towards shared goals, including appropriate investment of time and support by Council and staff liaisons.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Amy Robichaud
SECONDED by Katsy Concepcion

THAT this meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Next Meeting:

DATE: Tuesday, May 27, 2025
TIME: 5:30 PM
PLACE: Cascadia Room, 3rd Floor, City Hall
/ Teams Online

The Committee adjourned at 5:49 pm.

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