

From: "Singh, Sandra" <Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca>
To: "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"
Date: 10/23/2023 12:30:32 PM
Subject: Clarifications from Council item: Youth Strategy

Dear Mayor and Council,

We have received some questions following the presentation of the proposed Youth Violence Prevention Strategy last week. Specifically, the questions were related to the youth speakers and any relationship staff may or may not have had in relation to what the speakers discussed and whether staff knew about some of the concerning information that would be shared (assaults, etc.). I can assure Council that City staff had no role in the content of the speakers' comments.

Please find additional information below that hopefully provides some context and background for this proposed item, for work with community advisory committees generally, and for working with youth.

Who were the youth in attendance?

- Youth attending the council session were part of three different groups:
 - 3 of youth were directly associated with the project as they were previous Youth Community Developers. These YCDs are managed independently from the City by Equitas, an organization that supports youth development to engage in democratic processes, and they played a role in supporting the gathering of feedback by youth and ensuring youth felt comfortable and safe in interacting with City staff and staff of other public partners involved in the initiative.
 - The majority of the youth speakers represented youth from the Youth Reference Group (the broader advisory group convened to advise on the strategy); and
 - There were some youth associated with youth serving organizations.
- To confirm, City staff did not influence or ask youth to speak. The youth who spoke were entirely self-motivated to do so.

Council meeting: participation readiness

- As part of their engagement, staff updated youth who were involved on the proposed draft strategy so they could see how their engagement was represented and informed the recommendations.
 - This is the same work/report back staff would do for any other advisory group prior to presenting the strategy they advised on to Council.
- Because this was the first time that most, if not all, youth were attending and speaking at a Council meeting, City staff did offer an orientation to Council meetings: chambers, how meetings are run, protocols, and procedures. This was presented by the City's Democratic Engagement Manager from the City Clerk's Office.
- Staff are aware that the adults in the youth serving organizations who support youth did offer public speaking coaching for the youth who attended as many were uncomfortable with public speaking but wanted to speak. Apparently, some youth were so nervous that they had been practicing for as much as a month. City staff were not a part of this youth development activity.
- Staff did not advise the youth registered speakers on what to talk about.
 - Staff take care to never suggest to advisory committee members or others coming to Council about what to say and, as noted, were not a part of any practice sessions for content.
 - If asked by an Advisory Committee member about what to say at Council regarding work they have been a part of, staff always say we cannot offer advice except to note that they should feel free to say what they wish, including to critique the recommendations or work if that is what they are inclined to do.
 - For example, during the presentation of the Accessibility Strategy, the Accessibility Task Force Chair critiqued that there were no honouraria recommended for the Committee.

After Council ended, I met with many of the youth and their adult supporters to explain next steps procedurally. We discussed:

- the different decisions Council can make when presented with any staff report: approve, amend, reject, refer back to staff, defer until the next or other meeting, etc. I explained that deferrals and report backs are not unusual and that this often happens when Council wants a bit more time to do its due diligence.
- what a deferral means vs a report back and what is next procedurally (this was so they could understand what happened and learn about how local government works);
- the challenges with the briefing times in the last couple of months given so many holidays in October and the UBCM in September to explain why the briefing ended up being the same week as the report; and

- that Council receives a lot of material to read and sometimes needs more time to digest the content.

Overall, it seems the youth attending Council viewed this as an educational, interesting, and rewarding experience (feedback shared by them directly and through their adult supports).

Please note that some of the youth are going to reach out to seek to meet with Mayor and Council themselves directly. Staff did not suggest or encourage this. The youth are doing this in the same way that other constituents or advisory committee members reach out to Council to discuss their concerns and interests. Staff are not and will not be involved in any way.

As I noted in Chambers, while we are on a Federal fiscal spend timeline for grant funds, the deferral of Council decision by two Council meeting cycles is manageable. As we head toward Council's debate and decision on this matter, I will ensure that any questions from Council are responded to in a timely manner and will advise if any suggested amendments have significant implications for the federal funding. Please feel free to send questions to me directly.

Best,

Sandra

Sandra Singh | General Manager
Arts, Culture & Community Services
604.871.6858 | sandra.singh@vancouver.ca
Pronouns: she/her

Assistant: Sarah Pickstone
Phone: (604) 873-7408
E-mail: sarah.pickstone@vancouver.ca

The City of Vancouver acknowledges the unceded homelands of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Sel̓w̓itlh (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.