

**Minutes of the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee Meeting held
Thursday October 26, 2023, C.R.D., 625 Fisgard Street in 6th Floor Boardroom**

PRESENT:

Municipal Representatives: Marie-Térèse Little (Metchosin); Adam Flint (View Royal); Corey Wood, (Central Saanich) (EP); Mena Westhaver (Saanich); (EP) Jeff Bateman (Sooke) Kimberley Guiry (Langford) (EP); Marcie McLean (Highlands); Esther Paterson (Oak Bay) (EP); Sara Duncan (Sidney) (EP); Rose Stanton (Highlands-Alternate); (EP); Cynthia Day (Colwood);

Capital Regional District (CRD) Representative: Bill McElroy (EP).

School District Representatives: Karin Kwan, (School District 61 Trustee) (EP); Trudy Spiller, (School District 62 Trustee) (EP); Nola Silzer, (School District 63 Trustee) (EP).

Resource Members: Gord Magee and Mia Golden (Mobile Youth Services Team).

CRD Staff: Sharon Orr (Senior Committee Clerk) (EP); Donna Kroker, (EP); Marnie Essery (Secretary) (EP).

Regrets: Krista Loughton (Victoria);

EP - Electronic Participation

The meeting was called to order at 11:30 am.

1. Territorial Acknowledgement

The Chair welcomed everyone to the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples, on whose traditional territories we are blessed to live, work and play.

2. Welcome and Introductions

2.1 All committee members and resource agency representatives also introduced themselves.

3. Minister Mitzi Dean, M.L.A. Esquimalt-Metchosin and Minister of Children and Family Development

Thank you for the invitation to come here today. I appreciate the work that the committee has done and collaboration is vital. I joined the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee in 2008 and was a member until I was elected in 2017.

Youth are not concerned about school or police boundaries.

We all need to work together. This committee is doing important work that gets information out and creates awareness. As Chair of the Youth Matters subcommittee while I was active on this committee, we organized and hosted 4 Bright Ideas Conferences.

It is important to listen to youth and hear their voices. All of this makes a difference.

Thank you to this committee for its work and dedication to supporting vulnerable youth.

If this committee wasn't here, it would create a gap in the region.

[Honourable Mitzi Dean | BC Gov News](#)

Discussion

- The VFCYJC is concerned about long term stable funding for M.Y.S.T.

Minister Dean said that her office would be willing to help our committee connect provincial staff and administrators. There was a meeting proposed with service providers and police team.

Resource Agencies

M. Golden and G. Magee provided an update on the Mobile Youth Services Team.

- G. Magee and M. Golden have been overwhelmed. They have received a large amount of calls from new youths. It is very challenging to meet everyone's needs. Gang recruitment is aggressive and ongoing. They are seeing unprecedented and dire circumstances.
- The VFCYJC asked how can we help right now? Advocating for more funding for another police officer right now and counsellors who could help. Ideally, it would be great to have another team so that the cases could be split up.
- What can Councils do? It comes down to the funding. We need to hire appropriate people.

4. To Approve the Oct 26 Agenda

Recommendation: That the agenda for October 26, 2023 meeting of the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee be approved.

MOTION: J. Bateman/ A. Flint

CARRIED

5. Adoption of Minutes

5.1 Recommendation: That the minutes of September 28, 2023 Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee meeting be adopted with the following amendments:

- On Page 1 header, add committee to Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice
- Cendra Beaton is the Alternate Trustee Representative for School District 62.
- Number 4 on Page 2, the motion was approved as amended. On Page 3, the Communications subcommittee was 8.5

MOTION: C. Day/A. Flint

CARRIED

5.2 Receipt of the Steering Committee meeting notes of October 12, 2023

Recommendation: That the notes of the October 12, 2023 meeting of the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Steering Committee be received.

MOTION: J. Bateman/ A. Flint

CARRIED

6. No Chairperson Remarks

7. Presentations/Delegations

Mr. Bill Warburton, former VFCYJC member and an economist affiliated with the University of British Columbia, shares findings of his recent co-authored report "A Scientific Approach to Addressing Social Issues Using Administrative Data" (February 2023)

<https://thetyee.ca/News/2023/03/31/BC-Study-Targeted-Supports-At-Risk-Children/>

Mr. Warburton shared his Power Point Presentation 'How to reduce homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and poverty while saving money.'

Discussion

- Research supports that early literacy does correspond with graduation rates. Children need resources to help them reach the same equity level.
- Mr. Warburton thanked teachers for all that they do but there needs to be a broader approach between family and community.
- BC School Centred Mental Health Coalition would be a good contact. This would be a good place for this information to be shared and to be on a future agenda.

He will email his Power Point to vfamcourt@gmail.com and M. Essery will share it with committee members.

8. Subcommittees

8.1 Priorities and Grants (Marcie McLean)

Chair M. McLean shared that a grant application is currently being reviewed that was received. VFCYJC Members are encouraged to promote the grant process and direct people to our website for more information.

8.2 Capital Region Action Team for Sexually Exploited Youth (Bill McElroy)

Chair B. McElroy updated the committee on C.R.A.T.

The report shared with the October 26 meeting mail out has been copied and pasted for your convenience below.

Report to Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee October 19, 2023

1. crat.ca: In the Spring of 2023 our website came up for renewal, but we were not informed about this. As a result, we lost the crat.ca domain name and the internet provider agreed to sell it to us for \$5,000. We declined to buy our domain name back and instead secured a new site, capitalregionactionteam.ca The material from our old site has now been successfully moved over to the new site. We are still working on learning how to update the site.
2. Mobile Youth Services Team (MYST): MYST has been carrying on with its mandate throughout Covid, and have begun making presentations to schools. Covid has increased the use of the internet for grooming and recruiting youth. Gangs are getting more involved.
3. Impact of VFCYJC reorganization: a proposal was circulated and is attached. A subcommittee of 3 met to discuss the options and decided that the best option was to maintain the status quo for a year, to determine what the impact of the new structure of the VFCYJC within the CRD, and the role of CRAT within that structure.
4. CRAT members: because of Covid and the decision made by CRAT not to use Taking Care of Ourselves, Taking Care of Others (tco2), it has been difficult to get participation in CRAT meetings, particularly because of the high turnover from Agencies which usually attend CRAT and the fact that we were not doing anything concrete. The Chair will contact the agencies that have attended CRAT in the past to have them name new representatives.
5. Graphic Novel: in 2012 we received a legacy of \$12,000 to develop a graphic novel which could be handed out at awareness workshops given in schools. This would be designed to help teens

understand the issues of the youth sexual exploitation. A writer was engaged to write the script, but because of Covid, we have lost contact. We have also met with several people who have the capacity to construct a graphic novel. We continue to put the pieces together, so that we will have a finished product in the Spring or Fall of 2024.

6. Future Meetings: there was an overwhelming response that the meetings should continue during the lunch hour. However, since we now have several Councillors on CRAT, it has become increasingly difficult to find a day on which those Councillors are available. In the meantime, we will continue to meet on Tuesday 12 noon in the week before the VFCYJC meeting. Hopefully, we will be able to start meeting again in person. We are working on a schedule of 4 meetings per year, which will integrate with the VFCYJC meetings, which are 8 times per year.
7. Finances: Oak Bay Municipality has agreed to continue providing accounting services for CRAT. They have been doing this for 25 years and deserve our thanks. Our balance in the account is \$13,693, with \$12,000 reserved for the graphic novel project.

Submitted by Bill McElroy, Chair

8.2.2. Discussion Paper re C.R.A.T.

Copied and pasted for your convenience below.

2023 is the 25th Anniversary of the formation of the Capital Region Action Team (CRAT). It was formed, in part, because the "Kiddie Stroll" in Victoria was very disturbing to the Council and Staff of the City of Victoria. In the beginning, CRAT was successful in getting grants, and a number of full-time staff were hired.

By 2007, the funding had ceased and there was no longer a "Kiddie Stroll". By then, most youth sexual exploitation was run through Escort Agencies. There was a special meeting called, in 2007, with the purpose of winding up CRAT. By this time, CRAT had become a committee of the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee (VFCYJC) with annual funding through the Capital Regional District of \$1500 per year. At that meeting, it was decided to continue on with CRAT.

From about 2007 to 2020, CRAT brought over Taking Care of Ourselves, Taking Care of Others (tco2) from Vancouver, to provide interactive presentations to High School students in the Victoria area. Although the tco2 presentations were free, there was a cost for out-of-pocket expenses for the Children of the Street Society, who had developed the tco2 program. In the beginning, the annual costs were about \$1200 per trip. By 2020, those costs had escalated to almost \$3000 per trip. It became necessary to secure additional funding through the VFCYJC.

The goals of CRAT were pretty basic;

1. To raise awareness of the issue of child and youth sexual exploitation in the Greater Victoria area,
2. To educate students about the issue of child and youth sexual exploitation, and
3. To identify gaps in services for sexually exploited youth and work to close those gaps.

Some of the challenges were:

1. that there was a new group of 13-14 year-olds every year
2. that there was a high staff turnover at agencies which provided services to these youth, and
3. that raising funds for services for sexually exploited youth was becoming more difficult, because the issue was no long visible, and was therefore removed from policymakers' awareness.

Covid has accelerated these challenges. As we get back to "normal", there has been a huge gap in continuity with agencies serving sexually exploited youth. In addition, tco2 has not been providing

interactive presentations in schools for about 3 years. There has also been some concern that the quality of the presentations has declined since Children of the Street turned their programs over to PLEA Community Services. More gang activity in Greater Victoria has led to increased drugs, violence and the subsequent sexual exploitation of youth.

It is therefore timely to re-examine the role of CRAT in our community.

There are a number of options to consider:

1. Remain part of the VFCYJC in the same manner as in the previous 25 years,
2. Consider becoming a separate committee under the Capital Regional District,
3. Incorporate as a non-profit Society,
4. Merge with another agency which provides services to sexually exploited youth, such as Boys and Girls Club, the University of Victoria, or the Youth Empowerment Society, as examples, or
5. Wind up CRAT.

In addition to the above challenges, the issues of leadership and accountability have not kept pace with other organizations in the community. The current Chair has been Chair since 2007 and has been unable to find another Chair for the past 5-10 years. There are only a core of about 8 individual who regularly attend meetings, and it has become more difficult to secure meeting space and secure enough funds for operating costs.

Complicating the issue is that CRAT received a legacy of \$12,000 in 2019-20 in order to develop and print a Graphic Novel to hand out to students and parents at presentations. Because of Covid, this project has been on hold.

Discussion: CRAT should not be wound up. The sexual exploitation of youth is a growing and ongoing problem in Greater Victoria and needs an agency to coordinate and identify gaps in services. Merging with another agency makes a lot of sense, but what will we do if the selected agency decides it can no longer afford these services and just cancels CRAT. We can remain part of the VFCYJC as we have in the past, but that does not address the issues of funding, management and participation. CRAT could become a working committee of the CRD. This would address the issues of funding, administrative support and ensuring a process of accountability and personnel change.

Recommendation: That a subcommittee of 3 to 5 people meet to consider these options, come up with a recommendation and report back to CRAT and VFCYJC by September or October 2023.

Discussion

- B. McElroy updated VFCYJC that a meeting had taken place and a decision was made to maintain the status quo for now. VFCYJC Members are welcome to join the subcommittee and can contact B. McElroy if they are interested in participating.
- The world is changing and we need to adapt.
- B. McElroy has been told that this happens in poor areas but not here at ...insert name of school. That is not true. It does not matter background/socioeconomic status etc. It is happening to all youth regardless of circumstances.
- Committee Members have been advocating for an Integrated Child Exploitation Unit in Victoria. There is one on the Lower Mainland that is very successful. It was suggested to get information on some stats and resources that could help with our advocacy.
- There was interest in approaching C. Peters to speak at the February 22, 2024 VFCYJC Meeting.

8.3 Family and Youth Matters (Cynthia Day)

Chair C. Day is working on making connections.

Yesterday's The Village gathering made her more contacts. She would welcome new VFCYJC Members joining this subcommittee. Chair C. Day will be working on getting some youth events going. By providing food and a venue the goal is to hear youth's

perspective and elevate their voice on our committee.

8.4. Court Watch (Marie-Terese Little)

Chair M.T. Little shared that she spoke to someone at the Duncan Indigenous Court. They can accommodate 4 to 5 VFCYJC Members actively participating in their court process. Chair M.T. Little asked VFCYJC Members if they were interested in attending one of these court dates in 2024 to please let us know and she would coordinate outings. 8 people at the meeting expressed interest and a follow up email will be sent with more information to all VFCYJC Members.

8.5. Communications (Jeff Bateman)

Chair J. Bateman will email M.Y.S.T. letter to our Secretary to forward.

8.6. Treasurer's Report (Esther Paterson)-A budget for C.R.D. is in the works.

9. New Business

9.1. M.Y.S.T. Advocacy Update (Marie-Terese Little, Jeff Bateman)

A draft of an updated M.Y.S.T. Advocacy letter will be circulated to VFCYJC members. G. Magee shared earlier in the meeting that a M.Y.S.T. report is in the works and will be shared with the committee when it is finished.

**9.2. Qualification Matrix Update
(Marie-Terese Little, Esther Paterson)**

The Qualification Matrix will be reforwarded to the VFCYJC committee.

9.3. Resource Agency Master List

- **Master list + additions (Esther Paterson)**
- **Addition of agency overviews + links to reports/statistics (Jeff Bateman)**

This has been bequeathed to the Communications Subcommittee to be updated. The VFCYJC thanked E. Paterson for her work on this.

9.4. Administrative Support Update (Marie-Terese Little)

The Chair and Vice Chair will follow up with a contact possibly interested in helping with administration support and also follow up with M. Essery, VFCYJC's Secretary, regarding her role.

9.5. Location and dates of upcoming monthly meetings:

Nov. 23, 2023, Jan. 25, 2024 (AGM),
Feb. 22, 2024 in the CRD 6th Floor Boardroom, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

10. Notice of Motion-none

11. Correspondence-none

12. To Adjourn at 1:30 pm

**MOTION: C. Day/J. Bateman
CARRIED**