



West Point Grey Residents Association
Info@wpgra.ca
www.wpgra.ca

November 22, 2020
City of Vancouver Councillor Pete Fry
Cc. Mayor Stewart and Councillors and Park Board

Dear Councillor Fry,

Re: Jericho Hostel - Proposed Homeless Shelter

Thank you for your recent emails sent to many community members in response to their concerns, generally as shown in Attachment A, that have been subsequently forwarded to the West Point Grey Residents Association (WPGRA) Board. We very much appreciate your comments as they are the most detailed reply in writing from a City official that we are aware of on this matter since the motion was approved.

The Council directions approved in October, as shown in Attachment B, have created enormous concern and confusion in the community. We look forward to getting this clarified and have recently entered into discussions with the Mayor's Office Chief of Staff who is connecting us with the lead senior staff. We look forward to what we hope will be meaningful community involvement in the near future.

Our updated position on this issue can be found on our website at wpgra.ca with links to our letters to the City and Park Board, including this letter.

Your email makes reference to a flyer and we would like to specifically confirm, as noted on our website, that the flyer is not from WPGRA and does not reflect our views. A well-meaning local resident took the WPGRA email newsletter and then critically modified and distributed it without our consent. We ask that you not associate our name with this flyer as it only adds to further confusion.

WPGRA has consistently taken the position that the Jericho Hostel does not meet the City's location criteria as outlined in Attachment B and that there are no nearby services or transit for the homeless. We also are concerned about the precedent of using Park Board land for housing. The parks and recreation system are critically important for each community, particularly during COVID and as the city increases density over time.

We continue to wait for more information and clarity from the city. However, it is certainly understandable that residents in the community would jump to their conclusions, given the primary focus of the supporting report was the decampment of Vancouver Parks. It certainly appeared that Jericho was to be part of the decampment process for Strathcona. We are hoping that is not the case as you seem to indicate.

We agree that the Strathcona Park encampment should not be continued or replicated in any neighbourhood. People should be properly housed with the required services in appropriate locations as outlined by the City's criteria. We appreciate the points you raise as contributory to achieving that outcome.

Yours truly,

West Point Grey Residents Association Board of Directors

WPGRA Attachment A - Email - Example

From: "Fry, Pete" <Pete.Fry@vancouver.ca>

Subject: RE: [EXT] Re: Jericho Hostel : Proposed Homeless Shelter

Date: November 19, 2020

My apologies it has taken this long to get back to you - we get a lot of emails and while I read them all it's a challenge to reply to them all.

First, I want to acknowledge your concern around local context. I know the area well and I do understand the current context and amenities (as well as the lack of amenities) in making any decision about land and facilities use in this location.

As it happens, I live in Strathcona and have a very salient and realistic perspective on the impacts of a large unmanaged encampment on a residential neighbourhood. I wouldn't wish it on any community.

As you can appreciate we are grappling with a number of significant issues in our city, including homelessness, mental health and addiction and protest encampments like we are seeing in Strathcona Park – but also and more generally we are grappling impacts of the pandemic that include evictions, partners and children fleeing domestic abuse, people needing to isolate, people at risk of homelessness and others.

I want to assure you that we have as yet received no specific intention or recommendation from our staff for the Jericho Hostel, despite rumours I understand flyers alleging to be from the West Point Grey Residents Association and others may be circulating.

That said, the hostel has been identified as an underutilized asset, at a time when our city is in legitimate crisis – so suffice to say I think we will likely be looking at some sort of practical interim re-utilization of the space to respond to the challenges posed by the pandemic, as we are doing variously at facilities around our city.

I do understand your underlying concerns though.

I would suggest that any use of Jericho Hostel will consider the geographic, social and operational context. Realistically this would preclude street entrenched populations, people who use drugs or have severe mental illness because we cannot reasonably provide them with services at that location. I don't believe there is any interest for a low barrier shelter in this location, and it's not something I would support.

Furthermore the recent motion we passed at council regarding the supplanting of the protest encampment in Strathcona Park does specifically ask us to consider proximity to parks and community centres. This means that Jericho Hostel would be out of the question for relocating the tent city.

HOWEVER not all people experiencing homelessness will be 'street entrenched' coming from Strathcona Park or otherwise. Indeed many will find themselves in housing need as a result of eviction, job loss or changing living situations as a direct result of the pandemic - people like you or me, but with precarious housing caught up in the changing situation of this second wave.

So please understand that if and when decisions are being made, they will be done with a sensitivity to the vulnerability of the neighbourhood and any recommendations will be considered accordingly and very carefully, in the interest of everyone's safety and well-being.

Kind regards and stay safe

Pete Fry | City Councillor
City of Vancouver

WPGRA Attached B. - Map

Agenda: <https://council.vancouver.ca/20201008/spec20201008ag.htm>

Memo dated Oct. 2, 2020: <https://council.vancouver.ca/20201008/documents/spec1memo.pdf>

Motion: <https://council.vancouver.ca/20201008/documents/spec2.pdf>

Meeting Minutes: <https://council.vancouver.ca/20201008/documents/spec20201008min.pdf>

Re: Location criteria of temporary Pandemic Shelter(s), Part A2c of the subject Motion directs that: "Shelter(s) location(s) consider appropriate proximities of 300 meters to sensitive adjacencies like schools, daycares, parks, playing fields, or community centres;"

Map of area surrounding Jericho Hostel with 300 m circle.

