

Schedule 1 to the Minutes of the Public Hearing meeting of Richmond City Council held on January 22, 2024.

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From: Dawar, Meena [VCH] <Meena.Dawar@vch.ca>
Sent: January 17, 2024 3:49 PM
To: MayorandCouncillors
Cc: Lusk, Serena
Subject: Letter in support of a temporary use permit for Aster Place Modular Supportive Housing Building
Attachments: 2024 Dawar Letter to Mayor and Council re Aster Place Permit Renewal.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Categories: - TO: MAYOR & EACH COUNCILLOR / FROM: CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

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Dear Mayor and Council,
Please find attached my letter in support of the permit renewal or extension for this facility. Thank you for the care you provide to the most vulnerable Richmond residents.

Sincerely,
Meena Dawar

Dr. Meena Dawar
Medical Health Officer, Richmond
Vancouver Coastal Health

office 604-233-3170
e-mail Meena.Dawar@vch.ca

I acknowledge that my place of work lies on the unceded traditional homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. The content of this e-mail is confidential and may be privileged. If you receive this e-mail in error, please contact the sender and delete it immediately.

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9th floor, 8100 Granville Ave
Richmond, BC V6Y 3T6
Tel: 604-233-3150

18 January 2024

Mayor and Council

City of Richmond

By email: MayorandCouncillors@Richmond.ca

Dear Mayor and Council:

Re: Temporary Use Permit (TU 23-032827) – Aster Place Modular Supportive Housing Building

I am writing in my role as Medical Health Officer for the City of Richmond regarding the three-year permit extension of the Aster Place Supportive Housing facility. In November, I communicated support for the extension of the Alderbridge Supportive Housing lease, and I was pleased to see Council's continued support for the services provided there. For the same reasons, **I write to emphasize the importance of maintaining 40 units of supportive housing at Aster Place to address the needs of some of Richmond's most vulnerable residents, many of whom may otherwise face homelessness and other hardships.** Consistent with the City of Richmond's Homelessness Strategy and Affordable Housing Strategy, this facility and its associated services have been an invaluable source of stability and support for people who live there.

As you know, the most recent homelessness count shows an increasing number of people are experiencing homelessness in Richmond. According to the [2023 Homeless Count in Greater Vancouver](#), 162 people in Richmond experienced homelessness last year – a 91% increase since the last count. The homelessness count represents a point-in-time calculation on March 7-8, 2023, and is understood to be an undercount of the true number of people actually experiencing homelessness in Richmond. In particular, since 2020 Richmond has experienced a significant change in number of *unsheltered* people experiencing homeless (+55), an absolute change that is higher than most other municipalities in the region (only lower than Surrey, Vancouver, and Burnaby).

Facilities such as Aster Place Supportive Housing are critical to meet the needs of Richmond's residents experiencing homelessness, as well as people who have previously been unsheltered. **Housing and health are closely interlinked.** People who are experiencing homelessness generally have higher rates of illness, injury and death.ⁱ Poor health can be a determinant of homelessness as individuals with chronic health issues or injuries may experience problems with employment.ⁱⁱ Loss of employment in the absence of a safety net can quickly become a housing problem. Homelessness itself can lead to or exacerbate health problems. Individuals are at higher risk of communicable diseases, and can experience higher rates of mental anxiety, stress and depression, intentional or unintentional injury, and violence.ⁱⁱ Exposure to extreme of weather conditions is a danger. Chronic health conditions that require a controlled diet and regular medications are impossible to manage when living in precarious conditions.

Safe and secure housing is a necessary prerequisite to ensuring health and wellness. Having a home improves not only mental and physical health, but also intersects with other elements that affect our health, including income, social cohesion, equity and environmental exposures.ⁱⁱⁱ A stable place to call home provides each of us with a more secure foundation to meet the challenges we all face at some point.


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Supportive housing also helps connect people to health care. For people who use substances, housing can be the first step on their healing journey. Because residents of facilities like Aster Place have a stable home, Vancouver Coastal Health is able to provide more flexible supports that are better tailored to their needs. This includes connecting people with withdrawal management services (mobile “detox”), which is available at VCH’s Community Health Access Centre (CHAC).

I strongly encourage Richmond City Council to support the staff recommendation to renew the existing Temporary Use Permit for the Aster Place Supportive Housing facility for an additional three years. Additionally, I advise the City to expand its commitment to and investment in supportive housing as well as shelter beds in City Centre, where a majority of people experiencing homelessness are located.

As I have previously emphasized, the City of Richmond’s leadership in supporting some of the municipality’s most vulnerable residents through sites like Alderbridge and Aster Place is commendable. I look forward to continued collaboration between the City, the housing operator, and VCH to ensure that the necessary services and supports remain in place.

Sincerely,



Dr. Meena Dawar, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Medical Health Officer, Richmond

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- ⁱ Stephen Hwang (2021), “[Homelessness and Health](#),” *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 164(2): 229-233.
ⁱⁱ National Health Care for the Homeless Council (2019), “[Homelessness and Health: What’s the Connection?](#)” Fact Sheet.
ⁱⁱⁱ Mary Shaw (2004), “[Housing and Public Health](#),” *Annual Review of Public Health* 25: 397-418.

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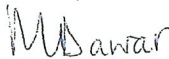
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