

~~Copy of~~ ~~File~~ May 29th

I am grateful for this opportunity to appear before the coordinating committee, particularly just now, because it seems to me that there is a good deal of misunderstanding about what is happening in Kitsilano.

You may know that Don Coates and John Cumming asked me to start the planning process for a community team in Kitsilano late in January. Together with Joan McDermott, a social worker with the Home Treatment Service, I have been doing that ever since. I have had frequent discussions with Don, Ray Goodacre and Roberta McQueen, in the hope of keeping them fully informed about what was going on.

After a series of meetings with individuals in the community, we set up a meeting of interested people which was jointly sponsored by ourselves and the staff of Kitsilano House (Neighbourhood Services). Most of the people attending that first meeting were invited and most were representing agencies (including Health Unit #3, Social Service, Children's Aid, School Board, Family Service, CMHA, MPA, the Area Resources Association etc). This first meeting took place on March 21st and three subsequent meetings were held before the public meeting on May 16th. These meetings were always well attended and gradually more non-affiliated citizens found their way to them. We talked about the objectives of the mental health team, about needs in the community, about desirable staffing patterns and especially about the ways in which the community might participate in the project.

The public meeting was organised by the above group, which had by now acquired a fair degree of cohesion. Sub-committees were struck, dealing with agenda and publicity. A detailed proposal was prepared which provided possible guidelines for a community advisory board. A questionnaire was prepared. The public meeting was designed from the beginning to serve two purposes: information and a vehicle for action.

The public meeting was well attended and went on much as expected, apart from the resolution to freeze all hiring etc. This bothered me at first, but on reflection I voted in favour of it. In essence, it merely states firmly that the community group wants a say in what is done. The other resolutions endorsed the principle of community involvement and set up a citizen's committee which was to be open to all interested persons. Thus the meeting declared its interest in the area of mental health.

The citizen's committee met on May 22nd. It was chaired by Nathan Karmel, the community development worker who had chaired the public meeting. Much of the discussion centered around the question of power and how much would in fact devolve onto the committee. There were some more radical speakers who wanted complete community control, one quoting the NDP policy of neighbourhood government as a model. But the consensus seemed to be closer to the idea of partnership, in which both the team and the citizens would work together on an equal footing wherever possible. A steering committee of five was elected, including myself as well as Barry Coull of the MPA. We were charged with the task of preparing some kind of broad policy statement by the next meeting. We were also told to take steps to seek out representatives of groups not yet active on the committee and we were asked to prepare a budget to cover the costs of preliminary planning. The steering committee met last Thursday and will get together once more before the next citizen's committee meeting on May 5th. ~~June 5th~~

We are moving towards the formation of an active and highly motivated citizen's

committee, determined to have a real say in the development and continuing operation of the community team. I would like to say that we will ignore this group at our peril. It is fairly representative and will become more so. Their request to be involved in all decisions directly affecting Kitsilano, including budget preparation and hiring should be respected. If the budget has already been submitted to the Metropolitan Board of Health, then perhaps it should be recalled so that the citizen's committee, or representatives of that committee, can examine it. No hiring should take place without the participation of representatives from the citizen's committee.

It is my opinion that we have the opportunity in Kitsilano to develop a first class community-based operation. I would like to work in partnership with the citizen's committee: I hope that together, you and the citizen's committee will make this possible.

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