

Council,
December 17, 1970

The City Manager advised that the Provincial Government will be approached with respect to cost sharing on the improvements to Basinview Home.

Africville Follow-Up Program

MOVED by Alderman MacKeen, seconded by Alderman Allen that, as recommended by the Board of Health, His Worship the Mayor appoint a committee of City Staff and Council members to meet immediately with the Africville Action Committee to discuss matters raised at the meeting of the Board of Health held on December 9, 1970. Motion passed

REPORT TO: Mayor Allan O'Brien and Members of City Council

FROM: C. McC. Henderson, City Manager

DATE: December 2, 1970

RE: Africville FollowUp Program

Since October 1968, Social Planning Staff have been in close communication with representatives of the former Africville community, relocated by the City of Halifax between 1964 and 1967. On March 12, 1969, City Council endorsed the recommendations contained in an Africville FollowUp Proposal prepared by a committee comprised of three members of City staff and six former Africville residents, elected at an earlier general meeting to which all relocated Africville relocatees were invited.

Essentially, that proposal consisted of a renewed commitment by the City to fulfill its promise of "rehousing, employment, education, and rehabilitation of the residents of Africville", responsibility for which was assumed in the 1963 endorsement of the Rose Report. In particular, it proposed a three-dimensional program of —

- I Establishing a loan fund of \$70,000 in the form of an incorporated Credit Union for families relocated from Africville;
- II Establishing a priority listing for the immediate consideration of the Halifax Housing Authority, of families relocated from Africville who have not yet been satisfactorily and/or permanently rehoused by the City;
- III Allocating staff resources to conduct rehabilitative and preventive programs deemed necessary for families relocated from Africville.

During the ensuing twenty months, Social Planning staff have endeavored to work towards the fulfillment of these goals in co-operation with representatives from the former Africville community. Although it is the opinion of staff that some progress towards achievement has been made in at least some of these areas, there is a full awareness and willingness to acknowledge that the goals are far from being realized. The frustration and dissatisfaction expressed in the accompanying submission from the Africville Action Committee, presented jointly to the Mayor and the Social Planner on October 29, 1970, supports this view and is a clear indication of the need for review and appraisal at this time. Only through honest and thorough evaluation of progress to date in the Africville FollowUp Program, taking into account both the feelings of the former Africville people and the assessment of staff, can a realistic redefinition of, and recommitment to, goals be achieved.

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I - SEAVIEW CREDIT UNION

In June 1969, the Seaview Credit Union was incorporated under the Nova Scotia Credit Union Act, as the vehicle for setting up a loan fund for the former Africville people. Because of the severe indebtedness of many families at high rates of interest, the Committee of Former Africville Residents assigned a high priority to relieving the debt burden by consolidating debts and making them repayable to the Credit Union at a lower rate of interest over longer duration where feasible.

The Credit Union operation was known to be a "high risk" venture from the outset for at least four reasons —

1. Lack of previous experience in the Credit Union movement of both City staff and Africville representatives, who comprise 16 of the 19 member Board and Committees, as stipulated in the Supplemental By-Laws;
2. Limited capacities of many borrowers to meet financial commitments, due to pressures of unstable employment, low wage levels, inflation, ill health, or other unanticipated circumstances;
3. Lack of trust on the part of many relocatees, stemming from the Africville Relocation and resulting in some members viewing the Credit Union as a City-sponsored project to be undermined rather than supported;
4. Lack of experienced management of the Credit Union.

Despite all of these vulnerabilities resulting in a high borrower delinquency rate, it is felt that the Credit Union has been a positive force in terms of stabilization of the financial circumstances of some families and in providing a valuable social development experience, through participation in the decision making of the Credit Union operation. Further, staff remain committed to the concept that the Credit Union as a self-help and self-directed program can and will, if successful in gaining the full support of its membership and strengthened by sound new management (both yet to be achieved) become a worthwhile investment in the future of the Africville people.

II - HOUSING

As of this date, thirty-three relocated Africville families are known to be accommodated in public housing. Except for two families presently being assisted to upgrade their standards of housekeeping through the Home Aid Project in order to attain Housing Authority acceptance, this represents the total number of relocatees known by Social Planning to be desirous of such accommodations.

The public housing occupants include many families whose earning capacities are severely restricted by reason of age, disability, or lack of breadwinner. However, at least a half dozen families presently in public housing have expressed a strong desire and appear to have the income potential to participate in a housing project offering the possibility of home ownership. There are, in addition, at least ten families presently living in grossly inadequate rental accommodations owned by private landlords or by the City of Halifax (and temporary, therefore, by definition) who also wish to obtain a more permanent, independent and adequate mode of housing through home ownership.

Against this background, then, Social Planning staff have been exploring alternative proposals for bringing home ownership within the reach of Africville families with combined earnings in the \$5,000 - 6,000 range. In this, staff have enjoyed the complete support and cooperation of Central Mortgage and Housing staff and have also received expressions of support, in principle from two private organizations in the community. To date, the lack of available serviced land has been the most serious barrier. However, staff will be ready, in the very near future, to present to Council for their consideration and support, preliminary plans for a housing project involving families relocated from Africville.

Finally, with reference to housing, there are a small number of households, consisting of several adults not necessarily related, relocated into City-owned housing, with serious unresolved social problems, making it virtually impossible to find suitable, permanent housing for them. The failure of Social Planning staff to make any effective gains in the rehabilitation of this small number of persons is as much a reflection of the lack of knowledge (in the social work field generally) in dealing with these problems, as it is a result of the shortage of staff resources. It would appear therefore, that the City must be prepared in the absence of appropriate and effective community resources to continue housing the small number of tenants comprising this group.

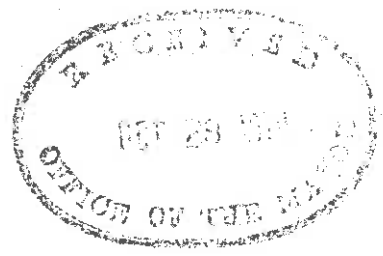
/Section III

III - REHABILITATIVE AND PREVENTIVE PROGRAMS

At the outset of the FollowUp Program, a joint decision was made by City staff and representatives on the Committee of Former Africville Residents that a Special Project Worker indigenous to the Africville community would be hired, if a suitable candidate could be found, to assume the two-fold responsibilities of managing the Credit Union and assisting other Special Project staff with the additional aspects of the Africville FollowUp program. As previously stated, this position was filled by a former Africville resident in June of 1969. Despite this individual's obvious commitment, serious personal problems interfered with his job performance necessitating his eventual dismissal. These events have taken a toll on the Credit Union operation as well as delaying progress in the other areas of concern, such as problems related to housing, home management, education and employment. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of staff time, of the Special Project Worker assigned to the FollowUp Program as well as other Social Planning staff, has been expended in the preparation of the previously-mentioned cooperative housing scheme (in conjunction with which arrangements were made for four Africville relocatees to attend a lecture series, 'Solving Your Housing Problem' at the Dalhousie Institute of Public Affairs); assisting with home management problems through the Home Aid Project and with family problems through counselling and consultation with other social agencies; assisting individuals to take advantage of educational and employment opportunities; and initiating an Employment Opportunities Project which will be offering participation to a small number of Africville relocatees in the near future.

As suggested by the Africville Action Committee Proposal, a more concentrated effort appears to be needed in the area of employment counselling, geared specifically to the relocated Africville residents. To this end, Social Planning is seeking to gain the cooperation of the Department of ManPower in making available a representative from Canada ManPower to serve on a Committee of City staff and Africville representatives which will attempt to devise a coordinated approach to employment counselling, outreach, referral, and followup.

The single greatest problem experienced by Social Planning staff in attempting to carry out their commitment to the FollowUp Program has been the inability to establish a meaningful dialogue with a representative group of Africville relocatees. Although the Committee of Former Africville Residents who, in partnership with Social Planning staff, were the authors and architects of the Africville FollowUp Program approved by Council in March 1969, were chosen as representatives at a general meeting of Africville relocatees held in October 1968, and were subsequently elected to various offices on the Board and Committees of the Seaview Credit Union by the open membership, their representativeness has, from time to time, been challenged by various sub-groups such as the Africville Action Committee.



THE AFRICVILLE ACTION COMMITTEE

It has been five years since the first Africville resident was relocated. The relocation, according to City officials was carried out to redress past discrimination and neglect. It was to provide these oppressed people with new opportunity and a fresh start. It was not, presumably, to obtain for future City development choice and valuable land.

What has been accomplished to date?

Over 50% of the relocatees have been moved at least twice since relocation. More than 80% of the relocatees report that 'things are going poorly' an estimated 70% of those relocated have had to seek assistance from social welfare agencies. The majority of the Africville relocatees are alienated and disadvantaged still.

Relocation has destroyed a community and left chaos in it's wake:

Of the 60 home owners in Africville prior to relocation possibly 20 can be considered in that category. The other 40 former home owners including those who were propertyless at the time of relocation are either in public housing or City owned housing. A few are in private rental .

(2)

The Africville relocatees have not received the employment or the other considerations recommended in the Rose report which was accepted by the City, the Human Rights Committee, and the Africville people as a minimum basis for relocation.

The relocation of Africville has turned out to be simply a real-estate operation instead of a project in social renewal. The promises of a new start were not fulfilled. While the City may have spent \$500,000 on the relocation project it has obtained 12 acres of valuable land. The scattered Africville people have not done so well. Their plight was recognized by the City two years ago when the Social Planning department reviewed the relocation and subsequently established the SEAVIEW CREDIT UNION to lend money to the relocatees. This Band-Aid measure was doomed to fail since the relocatees in need did not possess adequate financial resources in the first place to take care of additional indebtedness created by making other monies easily available.

Time is running out: Justice and redress must be obtained for the Africville people now. Reassessment of the present conditions must be undertaken to bring about a meaningful and realistic settlement based upon three critical factors:

- (a) The contract or agreement between the Africville people and the City which has not been honored and was a part of the guarantee promising new opportunities and human renewal in exchange for their community..

- (b) The City's agreement to re-evaluate the Africville properties until 1985 and compensate the relocatees should the land increase in value needs reviewing in the light of present conditions affecting the individual family concerned.

- (c) Failure to carry out the relocation in a fair and reasonable manner with resulting losses both financial and social to the people of Africville, all of which had foreseeable consequences as evidenced in the loss of homes by several families....crushing financial burdens by others..four home-buyers having to turn these places for raising their families into boarding houses to earn enough extra money for high mortgage payments...The loss of other homes are imminent.

The Africville Action Committee composed of former residents are forced to take whatever steps necessary to draw attention to the plight of the majority of their members and in view of the existing circumstances considers the City of Halifax to have the responsibility for making the 1964 relocation project work. The Africville Action Committee also feels, that in view of the long delay and the suffering caused the Africville people the following proposal is submitted for consideration with the request that City council appoint a committee to meet with the Africville relocatees to explore ways and means of resolving this serious matter.

(4)

Africville Action Committee Proposal:

- (a) Direct financial compensation: Monies to be made available to relocatees presently in financial crisis owing to pressing mortgage and rental debts.
- (b) Financial aid in conjunction with a new housing program for those who can benefit from such an undertaking. The City assuming responsibility for the down-payment on new housing
- (c) A special committee be set up consisting of City, Canada Manpower and Africville representatives to coordinate and counsel an employment program specifically geared to the relocatees.
- (d) The maintenance and revitalization of the SEAVIEW CREDIT UNION and related programs carried on by Social Planning.

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The Africville Action Committee
executive.

Mrs Elsie Desmond (President)

Mrs Yvonne Carvery (Vice-President)

Miss Linda Mantley (Secretary)