

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SAFER NANAIMO WORKING GROUP
HELD 2009-APR-14

PRESENT:

Councillor Merv Unger, Co-chair
Councillor Fred Pattje, Co-chair
Sharon Welch, DNPS
Inga Nielsen-Cooper, Tillicum Lelum
Matt Hussmann, DNPS
Randy Churchill, Bylaw Services
Gord Nixon, Oliver Woods Community Police Station
John Horn, Community Planning
Cst. Wally Taylor, RCMP (CPSO)
Bill Kiselbach, Bylaw Services (CPSO)
Gail Pasaluko, Parks and Recreation
Andrew Tucker, Planning
Cpl. Dave LaBerge, RCMP
Marg Fraser, VIHA

CPSO – Future/Update

Wally said that the CPSO is working well. Bill Kiselbach, Bylaw Enforcement Officer is now working from the office. The ambassadors are at full strength. Footprints Security is working out of the office. There are nine volunteers. There are lots of walk-ins.

The grant for the ambassadors is expiring in September.

Sharon has done a large research project surveying public perceptions of the downtown. The results are now being tabulated. She also coordinates monthly workshops. There will be a workshop on “cameras on patrol” which is a system to upload pictures of suspected shoplifters. This program will not be available to the public but will be available to store security personnel. This program targets chronic retail theft rings.

Matt said that the DNPS is in transition and that restaffing is taking place now. There are potential changes and the budget is being worked through with respect to the CPSO. It is hoped that the ambassador program can continue with or without a Service Canada grant.

John asked about public perception downtown. Sharon indicated that people felt safe during the day but less so at night. She also indicated that the survey

results showed that people want more police, ambassadors, security personnel etc. in the downtown area.

Randy said we are seeing a transition to the new CPSO. It was intended that the CPSO would be a hub. The City, RCMP and DNPS all run their own programs from this office.

It was Moved and Seconded that the CPSO hold regular operational meetings of concerned stakeholders and bring forward any policy matters to the SAFER Nanaimo Working Group for review. The Motion carried.

Update – Housing Strategy

The provincial government has announced funding to complete two projects; one of which is the Wesley Street site. This project is funded to completion. There will be a call for expressions of interest. Allan Neilsen Welch has been hired to look at communication and the relationship with VIHA. He has also agreed to come back to work out the engagement process. This is moving quicker than anticipated. Strategies will be needed to deal with public reaction.

Marg suggested that the Mayor and Council send a letter to VIHA advising of the approved capital funding for 40 units and emphasizing the need for VIHA service support for the housing in order for the project to be successful. Advise re projected timelines and then do regular communication updates to VIHA as the implementation plan rolls out to keep it on VIHA's radar screen so it is a budget consideration leading up to the time of completion.

Merv said that he serves on many committees. He said that this committee's members should feel proud of the outcome achieved in addressing the most chronic problem downtown.

Fred said he had a reaction from the public regarding costs for the project. John said that the BC Housing is listening. They are building to high environmental standards and the costs are twice those of the private sector. He said that costs are being evaluated and BC Housing is pulling back on some of their environmental pieces. Some of the costs will be for operating the facility.

The Safer Nanaimo Working Group will have a role in community consultation. The community will have legitimate fears and they will be looking for reassurance.

Inga said the Tillicum Lelum project will be breaking ground in September. The plan design is being done. The youth housing will be transitional with the elders mentoring the youth.

Merv pointed out that the Wesley Street project will house people who are already in downtown.

Dave said that neighbourhood fears need to be reduced. Commitment is needed from VIHA. CMHA bought the Balmoral without consultation. It will serve as a test to determine what will come with new projects. Marg again pointed out that VIHA must be informed so that they can provide support.

Randy said that the building should be up to CPTED standards and that support is a big aspect. The City must be honest with the neighbourhoods involved. The Housing First model will not work without VIHA participation.

Street Entertainer Bylaw Review

Randy stated that about five years ago there was a very different downtown. An injunction was put in place that street entertainers must abide by the law. The bylaw is convoluted and detailed. A review of the bylaw was mandated but did not occur. It is now time to update the bylaw.

Initial meetings have been held with stakeholders and there is an agreement to redo the bylaw. There has been strong support for amending the bylaw. It is recommended that SAFER guide the process of the bylaw amendment.

Update – Bar Watch

Dave said that Bar Watch will be a year old. Bar Watch has cut back on gang violence. The RCMP blitzed the bars in the summer and it was very successful. There was not as much emphasis in the winter and the program fell back. This program is very important as we do not want gangs entrenched in our community. There are some challenges. A meeting is scheduled with the bar owners. RCMP will be intensifying again for the summer.

Gord asked if reserve constables will be used for Bar Watch as they were last summer. Wally said that the reserves had committed to do more foot patrols in the downtown area.

Bar Watch has been attributed to the decrease in bar fights, date rapes, and impaired driving.

Dave said that there has been an increase in the number of itinerant people on the street. We will have to be vigilant as we do not want to be a destination city for the homeless.

There was a discussion about the meal program at the Salvation Army. Gord asked if the meal program is being relocated. John said there may be an additional location opening up. The Salvation Army has a truck which may be used to dispense food from a public location.

Harris House Health Centre Grand Opening

There was a lot of objection raised at the last meeting regarding the Harris Health Centre. The health centre has been operating since December 1 and there have been few issues. The health centre is well managed. Marg suggested that we use this success as an example.

DNPS Update

There has been a change of executive/board. Merv is now the president. DNPS is in a rebuilding mode. The BIA approval will possibly go through on Monday. There will be changes in staffing. The upheaval highlighted some problems which can now be addressed.

John said there was not a great flow back to the members. DNPS can act as a conduit to keep everyone informed.

Update on the Balmoral

Renovations are proceeding. CMHA, VIHA, outreach workers, support workers, and the Ministry of Housing are operating from this location. Appointments are arranged for clients. A memorandum of understanding will be signed. There have been a couple of serious incidents involving the police. A Good Neighbour Agreement will be signed.

The units are expected to be ready for occupancy by the middle of May. Many of the residents are pre-existing. A frozen meal program is operating on a limited basis. The outside of the building is not attractive.

General Discussion

Randy introduced Bill to the committee and welcomed him as the new downtown Bylaw Enforcement Officer.

John asked if there were enough issues to schedule regular meetings of the working group. Marg said that she thought that regular meetings would be

beneficial. Randy suggested that there be two kinds of meetings – open and operational.

Wally asked about the make-up of the CPSO meetings. Randy suggested that there be one meeting to develop the make-up.

Dave asked whether the Snuneymuxw First Nations could be included in the working group. They would like to be involved. They will be invited to the next meeting.

The meeting terminated at 11:17 a.m.