

# Staff Report for Decision

DATE OF MEETING March 14, 2018

AUTHORED BY JOHN HORN, SOCIAL PLANNER

SUBJECT RESPONSE TO HEALTH, SOCIAL AND SAFETY ISSUES IN THE DOWNTOWN

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To provide Council with a range of potential responses to the current social environment in the downtown that are actionable by the City of Nanaimo.

### **Recommendation**

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve the following recommendations:

- a. Continue daytime security services via contract with enhanced hours;
- b. Continue Urban Clean Up Initiative (twice weekly);
- c. Continue annual support to the Extreme Weather Shelter at 595 Townsite Road;
- d. Provision of rent supplements in support of Housing First program for homeless individuals;
- e. Provision of three portable toilets in the downtown;
- f. Additional safe syringe disposal boxes;
- g. Additional garbage cans at key locations;
- h. Continue provision of shower facilities for homeless individuals; and,
- i. Pursue partnerships to provide a daytime resource centre for homeless individuals.

## **BACKGROUND**

At the 2017-JUN-19 Council meeting, Staff was directed to provide a range of possible responses to health, social and safety issues in Nanaimo's downtown. A staff report on recommended priorities was received at the 2017-DEC-11 Council meeting and was further reviewed for budget decisions at the 2017-DEC-13 Finance and Audit meeting. Direction arising from that meeting was that staff return with a further review and budget by 2018-MAR-30. Council, at its Regular meeting on 2017-DEC-01 provided the following direction:

- “1. approve up to \$60,000 for safety and security provisions in the Downtown; and,
2. direct Staff to return to Council with a report on the balance of funds by 2018-MAR-30.

*The motion carried unanimously.”*

## **Current Initiatives**

The following represents a summary of current activities supported by Council, and a response to Council's direction to identify priorities for action. As of March 2018, the current municipal

initiatives and expenditure levels to address homelessness and attendant disorder in the downtown include:

- Enhanced daytime security presence in the downtown (a contract with Footprints Security that runs to 2018-MAR-31 **(Cost \$30,000)**)
- Implementation of an Urban Clean Up program, a contract with the Nanaimo Region John Howard Society that expires 2018-APR-07 **(Cost \$25,000)**
- Two additional safe needle disposal boxes **(funded within existing resources)**
- Coordination across City departments **(staff time)**
- Provision of rent supplements to the Housing First program to place homeless individuals in market rentals with support that expires 2018-MAR-31 **(Cost \$45,000)**
- Redeployment of Parks, Sanitation, and Public Works staff to downtown to provide more eyes on the street and enhance cleaning of the City centre **(staff time)**
- Provision of funding to the Unitarian Extreme Weather Shelter **(Cost \$45,000 per season)**
- In-kind support to Nanaimo's Homelessness Coalition **(meeting rooms, staff time)**
- Provision of showers for the homeless at Caledonia Park sports field. Contract with Unitarian Fellowship that expires in April of 2018 **(Cost \$10,000)**

#### Proposed Responses

Because a number of the existing responses conclude at the end of March 2018, the following is a comprehensive list of possible responses for the timeframe April 2018 through to the end of December 2018, unless otherwise noted. The items below are placed in order of priority. They do not include all of the priority responses that were in the 2017-DEC-18 staff report to Council, as they are not considered a high priority following subsequent review, or they are within the scope of other organizations.

##### **a. Continue daytime security services via contract with enhanced hours**

**Cost \$74,700**

This action falls under the purview of the Bylaw Department and would be sourced and managed by them. It is a continuation of the current daytime security presence funded by Council on 2017-DEC-18 with enhanced hours to provide fuller coverage throughout the day. The current daytime coverage runs from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. The nighttime coverage runs from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. The proposed enhanced daytime hours would cover current gaps from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. The funding source is proposed to be taxation.

##### **b. Urban Clean Up Initiative, twice weekly**

**Cost \$45,000**

The Urban Clean Up initiative consists of contracting with the Nanaimo Region John Howard Society (NRJHS) to walk through the downtown and adjacent residential areas and pick up discarded syringes, litter, etc. The NRJHS staff engage clients who have been street involved and or involved in the criminal justice system and are now working to reintegrate into mainstream society. The proposed \$45,000 budget will allow the Urban

Clean Up Initiative to operate until 2018-DEC-31 with the funding source proposed to be taxation.

It should be noted that Parks and Public Works (Sanitation) currently redeploy staff from their regular duties to provide garbage clean up downtown, but this is not sustainable on an ongoing basis. There may be a need to consider additional staffing to these departments to maintain a basic level of cleanliness in the downtown core.

**c. Continue annual support to the Extreme Weather Shelter at 595 Townsite Road**

**Cost \$45,000**

The City of Nanaimo has provided for many years funding each winter season (November to March) to the Unitarian Fellowship to support the provision of emergency shelter beds for those nights not designated as Extreme Weather by the Province of BC. This item represents a continuation of that support for the upcoming winter season 2018— 2019. The funding source for this initiative is proposed to be from the Housing Legacy Reserve.

**d. Provision of rent supplements in support of Housing First program for homeless individuals**

**Cost \$45,000**

In 2015, the City of Nanaimo provided a one-time grant of \$45,000 in support of Nanaimo's Housing First initiative which places homeless people into market rental units, with staff support to those individuals funded through the Federal government's Homeless Partnering Strategy (HPS). This money will run out by 2018-MAR-31, and a continuation of the City's support will allow the program to house homeless individuals who currently spend much of their time in the public spaces of the city. The funding source for this initiative is proposed to be from the Housing Legacy Reserve.

**e. Provision of three portable toilets in the downtown**

**Cost \$8,265**

One of the key issues identified by the merchants in the downtown is the incidence of public urination in doorways, alcoves and other spots. With a significant homeless population in the downtown core, it was suggested by many that the provision of public toilets would perhaps go some way to alleviating this issue. The funding source is proposed to be taxation.

**f. Additional safe syringe disposal boxes**

**Cost \$2,500**

Substance use patterns in our community have shifted towards increased use of opioids, with inhalation and subcutaneous injection the favoured methods. Along with this has come a marked increase in the number of discarded hypodermic syringes being discarded in the public realm. Several locations in the downtown have been identified that would

benefit from the provision of a safe disposal option. The funding source is proposed to be taxation.

**g. Additional garbage cans at key locations**

**No additional cost**

In collaboration with staff from the Sanitation section, several spots were identified that might benefit from the provision of litter receptacles. Sanitation staff indicated they would be able to supply receptacles from existing stock and service these within existing resources.

**h. Continue provision of shower facilities for homeless individuals**

**Cost \$30,000**

On 2018-JAN-15, Council approved the use of the Caledonia Park sports field shower facility and a budget of \$40,000 to implement the shower program for a one-year period. Of that total amount, \$10,000 was provided from Council's contingency fund to run the shower program to the end of March 2018, to allow a review of the shower program, and to identify a source for the remaining \$30,000. Regarding usage of the facility, 38 showers were taken in January and 88 showers were taken in February (see Attachment B). The funding source for the remaining \$30,000 is proposed to be taxation.

Please note that if a daytime drop-in resource centre for homeless individuals (see partnerships) were to be established, there is a possibility that the shower program could be incorporated into the range of services offered at that site.

**i. Pursue partnerships to provide a daytime drop-in resource centre for homeless individuals**

**City contribution \$100,000 per year**

A daytime drop-in resource centre would be configured as a resource centre with a range of services and supports provided by a number of community partners but with a core staffing function independent of those. The lesson learned from a drop-in space tried in Nanaimo in the past (the Living Room on Nicol Street), is the need for a substantial level of staffing to ensure the effective and safe provision of a daytime option for those who do not have access to a home or other alternatives where they can go, and to minimize the impact on the surrounding neighbourhood.

The cost of a resource centre is approximately \$250,000 per year based on an 8-hour service, 7 days per week. This requires a cost-sharing partnership with the Province. An allocation of \$100,000 by the City would allow the City to work toward an additional \$150,000 funding partnership with the Province to provide a daytime drop-in resource centre. Staff are not proposing this be budgeted for in 2018. Should a partnership opportunity require the City portion in 2018, Staff will review funding options and bring forward for Council's consideration.

## **OPTIONS**

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve the following recommendations:
  - a. Continue daytime security services via contract with enhanced hours;
  - b. Urban Clean Up Initiative, twice weekly;
  - c. Continue annual support to the Extreme Weather Shelter at 595 Townsite Road;
  - d. Provision of rent supplements in support of Housing First program for homeless individuals;
  - e. Provision of three portable toilets in the downtown;
  - f. Additional safe syringe disposal boxes;
  - g. Additional garbage cans at key locations;
  - h. Continue provision of shower facilities for homeless individuals; and,
  - i. Pursue partnerships to provide a daytime resource centre for homeless individuals.
  - **Budget Implication:** The recommended priority actions represent annualized total City of Nanaimo costs of approximately \$250,465. Of this total, \$90,000 is recommended to be allotted from the Housing Legacy Reserve. The remaining \$160,465 costs are recommended to be included in the 2018 budget.
  - **Strategic Priorities Implication:** Furthers the community value of Social Equity.

## **SUMMARY POINTS**

- Staff has conducted a process to further review priority responses to the health and safety issues impacting the downtown.
- Priorities for City responses include both a combination of recent responses and the addition of new responses.
- A daytime resource centre for homeless people is presented as a partnership response for the City and community partners.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Shower Usage Statistics

### **Submitted by:**

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### **Concurrence by:**

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