

MINUTES
SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
BOARDROOM, SERVICE AND RESOURCE CENTRE,
411 DUNSMUIR STREET, NANAIMO, BC
MONDAY, 2019-FEB-11 AT 1:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.

Present: Mayor L. Krog
Councillor S. D. Armstrong
Councillor D. Bonner
Councillor T. Brown
Councillor B. Geselbracht
Councillor E. Hemmens
Councillor Z. Maartman
Councillor I. W. Thorpe
Councillor J. Turley

Staff: J. Rudolph, Chief Administrative Officer
R. J. Harding, Director of Parks and Recreation
D. Lindsay, Director of Community Development
B. Sims, Director of Engineering and Public Works
Supt. C. Miller, OIC, Nanaimo Detachment RCMP (entered 1:10 p.m.)
K. Fry, Fire Chief
D. LaBerge, Manager of Community Safety
L. Bhopalsingh, Manager, Community and Cultural Planning
J. Horn, Social Planner, Community and Cultural Planning
K. Kronstal, Social Planner, Community and Cultural Planning
D. Blackwood, Client Support Specialist (vacated 1:09 p.m.)
S. Gurrie, City Clerk
J. Vanderhoef, Recording Secretary

1. CALL THE SPECIAL MEETING TO ORDER:

The Special Committee of the Whole Meeting was called to order at 1:01 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

It was moved and seconded that the Agenda be adopted. The motion carried unanimously.

3. REPORTS:

(a) Housing and Homelessness

Introduced by Dale Lindsay, Director of Community Development.

Presentations:

1. Lisa Bhopalsingh, Manager, Community and Cultural Planning, provided an overview of the presentations.

2. Karin Kronstal, Social Planner, provided a presentation on affordable housing and spoke regarding the following:

- Nanaimo's affordability challenge
- The Housing Continuum
- Federal government investment
- Homeless Partnering Strategy – federal government allocates \$811,000 annually, agreement has been renewed for another 10 years to be renamed "Reaching Home"
- Role of provincial government - funding programs, provides legislative framework, BC Housing partners with local governments and agencies to develop supportive housing

D. Blackwood vacated the Boardroom at 1:09 p.m.

Supt. C. Miller entered the Boardroom at 1:10 p.m.

- Current BC Housing projects 2019
- Role of municipal government – adopting growth strategies, housing-friendly zoning bylaws, property tax incentives, providing land/buildings
- City of Nanaimo actions:
 - Participates in Nanaimo Homeless Coalition
 - \$36,000 grant to Homeless Coalition
 - Secondary suites, density bonuses, Development Cost Charge relief for affordable/supported housing
 - Rent supplement to John Howard Society
 - Contribution of works and services costs to supported housing
 - Provided land for supported and affordable housing
 - Social planning grants to address homelessness
 - Provided funding to various shelters in the community
 - Funding for shower program and food bank warehouse
- Affordable housing strategy objectives - increase supply of rentals, support infill in existing neighbourhoods, diversify housing forms, support low income and special needs housing
- Affordable housing strategy update on current projects – rental accommodation regulation, adaptive housing bylaw, mapping of rental stock, affordable housing site acquisition criteria

Committee discussion took place regarding the numbers for rental units presented and if these numbers included all rentals within the community or just supportive housing units.

3. John Horn, Social Planner, provided a presentation regarding homelessness and spoke regarding the following:

- Homelessness in Canada and the historical homeless demographic versus today
- On any given night 35,000 people are homeless in Canada
- Count of homeless people recorded in Nanaimo in 2016 versus 2018

- Historical trends in homelessness

Committee discussion took place regarding a decline in homelessness in 2006-2008 on the graph titled “Historic Trends in Homelessness”. John Horn, Social Planner, noted that this was due to an aggressive program to address homelessness at that time. Discussion took place regarding current developments coming forward and if these could have a similar effect on the rental market.

John Horn, Social Planner, continued his presentation as follows:

- Barriers to housing – discrimination, criminal history, addiction, mental health issues, disabilities, domestic violence, cost of rent, low income
- Nanaimo Housing First Action Plan 2008 - goal was to eliminate chronic homelessness through a “Housing First” approach, target of 160 housing units paid by the provincial government, 153 housing units constructed, City provided majority of the land

Committee discussion took place regarding the following:

- Number of tenants in these housing units, the turn over rate of tenants and success rates
- BC Housing building housing for people who do not need supported/staffed housing. John Horn, Social Planner, responded that BC Housing provides many different types of housing to the community.

John Horn, Social Planner, continued his presentation as follows:

- Impact of municipal actions – supportive housing units have housed many of the chronically homeless population, funding provided to the Unitarian Extreme Weather Shelter, Homeless Partnering Strategy
- Staff are conducting studies to show impact of supportive housing projects on the surrounding neighbourhoods

Committee discussion took place regarding the various shelter programs provided across the City. John Horn, Social Planner, spoke regarding the shelters available within the community. Discussion took place regarding the use of drugs and alcohol within these premises. John Horn, Social Planner, noted that drugs and alcohol are not permitted within the premises but people will not be turned away as long as the situation is safe for all involved.

John Horn, Social Planner, continued his presentation as follows:

- Housing Legacy Reserve – established July 2005 by City Council, reduces Development Cost Charges, site works and services, and renovation costs, could be used for land purchases, suits the left side of the Housing Continuum, annual allocation of \$165,000

Committee discussion took place regarding funding from the Housing Legacy Reserve being provided to people who are about to become homeless as a preventative measure. John Horn, Social Planner, explained that this reserve is designed for construction purposes and has statutory limitations. Discussion took place regarding the \$165,000 annual allocation and the current balance of \$2,270,127.

John Horn, Social Planner, continued his presentation as follows:

- The Homeless Coalition – formed in 2015, members include non-profit agencies, government bodies, faith groups and residents
- Nanaimo's Action Plan to End Homelessness 2018-2023

4. Signy Madden, Executive Director, United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island, spoke regarding the work of the Nanaimo Coalition of Homelessness as follows:

- Snapshot of Nanaimo's Homelessness - 70% of homeless population are men, 30% are women, 1/3 are First Nations, 335 homeless individuals counted in spring 2018 versus previous count of 174 during the winter of 2016, 55% are between 25-44 years old and 22% are 45-54 years old, most have lived here for 5-40 years

Committee discussion took place regarding how Nanaimo's homeless numbers compare to other local communities. John Horn, Social Planner, noted that most comparable communities are in a similar situation.

Signy Madden, Executive Director, United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island, continued her presentation as follows:

- Nanaimo needs more supportive housing to address the homeless crisis
- Reasons for the crisis - lack of affordable housing, addiction and mental health, barriers to housing and gaps in services
- Building on previous work – memorandum of understanding between the City and BC Housing, 2006-2008 plans developed, Federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy funding secured, Island Health implemented various strategies, Homeless Coalition
- The Action Plan - strategies in the Action Plan should be updated based on what was learned through Tent City in Nanaimo
- Members of the Homeless Coalition
- United Way's role on the coalition - community entity for federal funds invested in Nanaimo, inspires donors, invests grants to help vulnerable

Committee discussion took place regarding how the federal funding is spent by the United Way and if it is specifically for homeless. It was noted that federal funding is for homelessness. Discussion continued regarding those funds being used for people on the verge of eviction to avoid homelessness. Signy Madden, Executive Director, United Way Central & Northern Vancouver

Island, noted that there are opportunities for rent subsidies and other options to assist people.

Signy Madden, Executive Director, United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island, continued her presentation:

- United Way is a community entity and a fund raising entity
- City's role on the coalition to date – City staff member co-chaired coalition, participated in creating the Action Plan, part of the Allocation Committee and recommended Homeless Partnering Strategy investments
- The coalition is ready to evolve from a place of information to a place of stronger leadership
- Requested political leadership through implementation of the Action Plan and providing Staff with the resources to act on the plan

Committee discussion took place regarding the following:

- The difference between supportive housing and affordable housing
- Growing frustration of the public surrounding the supportive housing units relate to issues of mental health and drug addiction
- Helping the homeless who want help and addressing the criminal aspect that is causing issues
- City taking a more active leadership role to ensure the concerns of the public in areas surrounding supportive housing units are addressed
- Availability of rental accommodation/housing within the community
- What does support look like in supportive housing
- Need for an array of affordable and supportive housing and a coordinated access system to ensure people are supported through the system
- What would City participation look like? Signy Madden, United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island, suggested that Mayor and Councillors and City Staff work with Island Health, and BC Housing to develop a strategy
- Average room costs in Nanaimo

Jake Rudolph, Chief Administrative Officer, spoke regarding the topic of homelessness being part of a series of debriefings for Council and noted that simultaneously Council is working on its Strategic Plan. He noted that there is no pressure for Council to make a decision today and the intent is to provide an overview and understanding of what is going on.

It was moved and seconded that the "Housing and Homelessness" report dated 2019-FEB-11 be received for information. The motion carried unanimously.

(b) BC Housing Temporary Modular Housing Update

Introduced by Dale Lindsay, Director of Community Development.

The Special Committee of the Whole meeting recessed at 2:32 p.m.

The Special Committee of the Whole meeting reconvened at 2:43 p.m.

Councillor Maartman vacated the Boardroom at 2:45 p.m.

Councillor Geselbracht returned to the Boardroom at 2:45 p.m.

Presentations:

1. Lisa Bhopalsingh, Manager, Community and Cultural Planning, provided an update on the BC Housing Temporary Modular Housing Sites, and spoke regarding the following:
 - Provided a timeframe for various events relating to homelessness in 2018 and 2019 - Tent City, 30 shelter beds, 35 emergency beds, construction period for the Temporary Modular Housing, 170 people housed
 - Due to the court order to close Tent City and the impending cold weather, BC Housing decided to move people into the modular housing sites before construction was completed
 - Challenges faced by operators - under construction, incomplete site offices, kitchens, communal areas, issues with building locks, fencing, lighting, cameras, ongoing social issues in neighbourhoods
 - Actions being taken to address issues – regular communication with BC Housing, site operators, RCMP and others
 - Communication – community meetings and advisory committees, City is actively collaborating with several agencies to improve conditions for neighbours and residents
 - Site Safety Improvements – B.C. Housing is working on improvements to security and on-site safety such as: fire safety, security cameras, site entrance security improvements, security personnel strengthened, staff training/protocols, Clean Teams established

Councillor Maartman returned to the Boardroom at 2:54 p.m.

- Neighbourhood Support and Safety – City staff are coordinating garbage and needle pick-ups with School District and Clean Teams from the sites
- Parks Bylaw going to Council for consideration
- Beban Park - increased monitoring safety, increased clean up, safety assessment underway, lighting improvements, communications with leaseholders and user groups to address concerns
- Ongoing support for supportive housing residents - Island Health, Canadian Mental Health and others providing daily on-site support services to residents including: mental health care, addictions support, access to community services, connections to employment and training options, transport to medical appointments

- Next steps for the City:
 - Working with BC Housing to build permanent housing options
 - Collaborate with key agencies to implement plans
 - Staff reviewing resource demands to maintain levels of cleanliness and safety of public spaces
 - March 4, 2019, upcoming discussion of inter-connected social issues and actions to address them
 - Working with the Homelessness Coalition

Committee discussion took place regarding the following:

- The selection process for the 170 people placed in supportive housing
- BC Housing's priority to move people from Tent City specifically
- Providing supportive housing versus nightly shelter beds

2. Dave LaBerge, Manager of Community Safety, spoke regarding the "Parks, Recreation and Culture Regulation Bylaw 2008 No. 7073" and noted the following:

- Amendments to the "Parks, Recreation and Culture Regulation Bylaw 2008 No. 7073" (Parks Bylaw) will be coming to Council
- Various implications to laws and public policies and their enforcement as it relates to homeless individuals
- Amendments to the Parks Bylaw aim to update the bylaw to reflect changes in how municipalities can allow people to shelter in public spaces and use public spaces
- 2005 Victoria and 2015 Abbotsford precedence setting cases shaped how municipalities can respond to people taking shelter in public spaces
- In Abbotsford the Court noted the following:
 - Public spaces are intended for use by all citizens
 - Ruled homeless are allowed to sleep in and set up shelters in public spaces and parks between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m.
 - Noted this constant movement of homeless exhausted their already vulnerable positions and inhibited service providers from locating these individuals to provide help
 - Did not specify how homeless may use parks for the purpose of shelter but said the local governments should decide where those places should be
 - Suggested that local governments designate areas where people can get uninterrupted sleep, eat, and tend to their personal hygiene
- Working with the Parks and Recreation department to draft a bylaw that is consistent with current case law
- Noted that current legislation is not compatible with the case law when stating a complete prohibition on erecting shelter or taking overnight abode within a park. These laws are unconstitutional
- Schedule D of the proposed amendment bylaw will identify parks that are prohibited from overnight camping

Committee discussion took place regarding facility provisions for people seeking shelter within a park or public space.

3. Supt. Cameron Miller, OIC, Nanaimo Detachment RCMP, provided Councillor Armstrong with a long service certificate for her 35 years of service with the RCMP.

Supt. Cameron Miller, OIC, Nanaimo Detachment RCMP, provided a presentation regarding community-wide safety as follows:

- Homelessness is not a crime
- Timeline of events relating to homelessness beginning in March 2018 - December 2018
- Current situation - large homeless population still exists in Nanaimo, various sites throughout the City, RCMP continue to work with all sectors of community to ensure public safety
- Increases in calls for service between 2017 and 2019
- Increases in calls for service surrounding Labieux Place – increased 10% from previous year in 2018, increased 60% from previous year in 2019, not all calls for service are criminal issues
- Increase in calls for service surrounding Newcastle Place – increased 11% from previous year in 2018, increased 53% from previous year in 2019
- Factors that contribute to increased crime - no one cause, changes to legislation, all crimes are seeking financial gain with the exception of crimes of passion, two types of theories - biological theories and sociological theories
- Current police activities - Community Advisory Committees, Block Watch, increased patrols, enhanced bar watch, crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) analysis with City Staff and community, community citizens patrolling, dedicated police officer reviewing all files for each location, ongoing relationships with Island Crisis Care Society, Pacifica Housing, BC Housing
- Pro-active community ideas - improving lighting, concealing or removing targets such as cell phones in cars, unlocked sheds etc., Block Watches

Committee discussion took place regarding the following:

- Have crime statistics declined in the downtown area since the closure of Tent City? Supt. Cameron Miller, OIC, Nanaimo Detachment RCMP, responded that there is an upward trend in the community as a whole, but improvement has been noticed in the downtown area since Tent City closed.
- Statistics regarding the percentage of property crimes that are drug related
- Sharing of information between the RCMP and operators of the housing units. Supt. Cameron Miller, OIC, Nanaimo Detachment RCMP, responded that it would be up to the housing provider to decide how to deal with someone who is arrested by the RCMP.

- BC Housing's process for dealing with someone who is selling drugs out of the housing site. Lisa Bhopalsingh, Manager, Community and Cultural Planning, noted that there are ongoing discussions with housing operators and BC Housing. City staff have been addressing this on behalf of the community; however, do not have a say in how operators handle residents.

J. Rudolph vacated the Boardroom at 3:44 p.m.

- What type of criminal activity is recorded on the crime map available on the City website?

It was moved and seconded that the report titled "BC Housing Temporary Modular Housing Update" dated 2019-FEB-11 be received for information. The motion carried unanimously.

J. Rudolph returned to the Boardroom at 3:48 p.m.

4. QUESTION PERIOD:

- Terry Wagar re: youth drop in centre, increased calls for service and percentage of calls for service relating to criminal activity

5. ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved and seconded at 3:51 p.m. that the meeting terminate. The motion carried unanimously.

CHAIR

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

CORPORATE OFFICER