

DATE OF MEETING | May 4, 2020 |

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**SUBJECT | COMMUNITY POLICING AND SERVICES OFFICE –
18 VICTORIA CRESCENT**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide Council with background information to support a decision to relocate the City's parking bylaw officers and parking clerk from the Community Policing and Services Office to the Service and Resource Centre. |

Recommendation

That Council terminate the current lease of the Community Policing and Services Office at 18 Victoria Crescent and relocate the City's bylaw parking function to the Service and Resource Centre.

BACKGROUND

The Community Policing and Services Office (CPSO) is situated at 18 Victoria Crescent (Attachment A), and is the current worksite for the City's downtown bylaw enforcement and parking services.

The origin of the CPSO concept goes back several decades when the office was the Community Police Office (CPO) operated by the RCMP on Wharf Street behind the Coast Bastion Hotel. At the time, CPOs were popular neighbourhood-based crime prevention programs staffed by police officers. Community-based policing was the exclusive function of the downtown CPO.

The Community Policing and Services Office opened in 2007 to deliver the following services:

- Community Police Officer
- Community Policing Coordinator (civilian City employee)
- Community volunteers and "Citizens on Patrol" program
- Downtown Ambassador Program
- Private downtown security patrols

The CPSO continued to operate as a community policing office for several years, supplemented by volunteers and supported by private security daytime patrols contracted by the City. The Downtown Ambassador Program was developed using Service Canada grants to deploy a group of friendly staff to welcome visitors, provide information, and to serve as extra eyes on the street. The program was discontinued when Federal funding expired in September 2009.

The RCMP re-deployed community policing resources into a school liaison program, and the community policing coordinator was relocated to the detachment. The contract for daytime private security patrols was discontinued in favour of patrols during night hours when the CPSO was not open. The Downtown Ambassador Program and Citizens on Patrol were both discontinued. Downtown policing was led by the RCMP Bike Patrol, which operated out of the detachment.

In 2012, the City brought downtown parking enforcement in house, hiring new bylaw enforcement officers who would substantially fulfill the daytime security and ambassadorial roles, in addition to parking and enforcement duties. A full-time parking manager was hired in December 2012, and four full-time parking patrol bylaw officers and a parking clerk were located in the CPSO. The office has been a downtown bylaw/parking services office from that time forward.

In 2016, Western Management Consultants conducted an assessment of the City's organization and operations, presented as the City of Nanaimo Core Services Review Report ("Core Services Review"). The recommendation of the Core Services Review was to close the CPSO and move Staff to the Service and Resource Centre (SARC). It was noted that SARC had enough space to accommodate the CPSO Staff, and would save \$60,000 annually in rent, utilities, and services (note: the actual 2019 budget to operate the office was \$40,630).

Council referred the matter to the Public Safety Committee to research options and provide recommendations on whether to close the office, repurpose it, or leave it operating in its current capacity.

The committee received information from stakeholder groups, including local business owners and residents who spoke passionately to keeping the CPSO open, stating it had a prominent role in the safety and stability of the neighbourhood. This group also requested the CPSO be more accessible to the local community for meetings and public use.

The RCMP advised no police officers would work out of the CPSO in an operational capacity in the foreseeable future, as there were insufficient resources and the building did not meet minimum security standards for their secure networks and equipment.

The committee recommended to Council the CPSO remain open, but that it be rebranded as the "Community Resource Office" as police services were no longer available. They further suggested additional opportunities be explored to open the office to other agencies that provide services and engage with street-entrenched and homeless individuals. On 2018-FEB-19, Council accepted these recommendations, passing a motion to keep the CPSO open and to seek opportunities to engage other community services. |

DISCUSSION

The CPSO on Victoria Crescent was proposed in 2007 as part of a broader plan to address social conditions that existed in the Victoria Crescent area. The intention was to relocate an existing community policing office and co-locate other security, ambassador, and volunteer programs.

Policing, ambassador, volunteer, and private security services were discontinued many years ago, leaving the CPSO operating solely as a bylaw and parking services office. The location is not suitable for policing services without substantial leasehold security enhancements.

The recommendation that health and social outreach teams work out of the CPSO is not feasible, as many outreach team clients would not attend to an office where enforcement services are co-located in addition to other privacy, security, and data protection challenges.

The City Bylaw Services Section is currently segregated into sub-units in two worksites: six bylaw officers and a parking clerk work out of the CPSO; the section manager, senior bylaw supervisor, three bylaw officers, a ticket/screening clerk, and the bylaw steno work out of SARC. The clerks at SARC receive and dispatch calls for service, process tickets, and provide adjudication for bylaw officers working out of both offices. Parking permits are administered at the CPSO.

This arrangement contributes to inefficiencies that negatively impact service delivery to the community, and provides limited opportunity for support Staff and bylaw officers to cross-train, or provide coverage for leave and absences. Members of the public are often confused or frustrated when they are re-directed between offices to receive specific services relating to traffic, parking, permits, or general bylaw services. Two worksites and seven-day-a-week coverage also limits consistent support and supervision of all employees.

Local businesses and residents have previously requested the CPSO remain open, as it is felt to provide a measure of safety and security in the immediate downtown area. Homelessness continues to be a pressing issue in the community, but it is not as concentrated in the Victoria Crescent area downtown as it once was. The Bylaw Services team, working out of the CPSO, provides an important and sustaining security and safety role through their daily foot patrol activities throughout the downtown area. It is their continuous presence on the streets that brings a measure of public safety, which would be unchanged if they operated from SARC. The CPSO should not be viewed as a panacea that reduces crime or disorder in the area, as the parking clerk is often the only employee in the CPSO throughout the day. The CPSO office is not a suitable site to co-locate enforcement, health, and social outreach services.

In a typical work day, the downtown bylaw officers do not spend a great deal of time in the CPSO. They collect their equipment, check overnight security reports, and go onto the street to address security matters around the downtown area before businesses open for the day. The parking clerk is often the only employee working in the office who is available to serve members of the public who come in for assistance. There were several incidents in the summer and fall of 2019 where highly agitated individuals entered the CPSO wielding weapons, including baseball bats, demanding to speak to a bylaw officer about their belongings that had been removed from unoccupied encampments in parks and public plazas. The CPSO door is now locked during the day when the parking clerk is working alone, with public access on a case-by-case basis by appointment or by knocking on the door.

Cost to Stay

The annual rent is approximately \$40,000 plus utilities and cleaning charges. Additionally, if the office is to remain open, a leasehold improvement would be required to install an electronic entry system to permit the public entry to the building, at a cost of \$1,000.

Due to operational and customer service needs, Staff have determined that terminating the current lease and relocating the City's bylaw officers and parking clerk is the best decision going forward.

There will be minimal moving costs, with space at the SARC building being identified through the space planning initiative.

OPTIONS

1. That Council terminate the current lease of the Community Policing and Services Office at 18 Victoria Crescent and relocate the City's parking bylaw function to the Service and Resource Centre.
 - Advantages: Relocating the parking bylaw Staff to SARC will help consolidate bylaw operations in one location. The relocation will enable parking enquiries to be administered through the City's Permit Centre at SARC, providing a one-stop shop for service delivery model.
 - Disadvantages: Vacating the premises will temporarily create a vacant store front on Victoria Crescent.
 - Financial Implications: The City will save \$40,000 per annum on rent and utility payments for the property.

2. That Council direct Staff to continue to operate the Community Policing and Services Office at 18 Victoria Crescent for the City's parking bylaw function.
 - Advantages: Some members of the downtown business community would support this option, feeling the operation of the CPSO aids in creating a safer environment downtown.
 - Disadvantages: Parking bylaw officers spend very little time in the CPSO as they attend to parking and public disorder issues in the downtown core. Having the parking bylaw function in the SARC Building with the rest of the Bylaw team will not be met under this option.
 - Financial Implications: The City will continue its obligation to pay rent and utilities of approximately \$40,000 to keep the CPSO open.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The CPSO was originally the Community Policing Services Office located downtown and operated by the RCMP.
- The CPSO opened on Victoria Crescent in 2007. Police services and other programs were removed from the CPSO over time and replaced with a downtown bylaw enforcement and parking patrol service.
- The 2016, City of Nanaimo Core Services Review Report recommended the closure of the CPSO, moving bylaw parking services to SARC at a savings of \$40,000 annually.

- In 2018, Council directed the CPSO to remain open and available for use by other agencies providing outreach services.
- Health and social outreach services have declined to co-locate with enforcement personnel at the CPSO.
- Existing bylaw services could be better coordinated by closing the CPSO and moving Staff to the SARC office.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: CPSO Location – 18 Victoria Crescent

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