

ATTACHMENT A

418 Fitzwilliam Street
Nanaimo, BC V9R 3A1

May 19, 2020

City of Nanaimo
455 Wallace Street
Nanaimo, BC V9R 5J6

Attention: Mayor and Council

Dear Sirs, Mesdames;

**RE: Urgent Request to Appear As Delegation
Plan to Restore Old City Quarter Security and Pride of Place**

We are writing to request to appear before Council to identify concerns, and solutions related to a recent sharp increase in the presence and impact of homelessness within the Old City Quarter. Since the middle of March, as part of the changes brought about by COVID 19, there have been very few residents, and no business activity, on downtown streets. At the same time, the homeless population has continued to grow in this neighbourhood resulting in a rapidly deteriorating environment for residents and commercial tenants of the Old City Quarter. We are now hearing from these residents and tenants that they no longer feel safe in and nor do they enjoy the changing character of the neighbourhood. Directly related to these impacts, we are seeing that both new and longer term community members are choosing to leave. We feel that this represents the undoing of many years of determined community effort to revitalize the Old City Quarter and all of downtown Nanaimo.

As representatives of the property owners in the Old City Quarter, we are not prepared to allow this negative trend to continue and have developed an action plan intended to reverse these impacts. Recognizing that safety, security and pride of place are responsibilities that requires collaborative action we are asking for the City's support and assistance. As a coalition of property owners working together with the existing OCQA BIA, we are prepared to step forward to administer program and to shoulder our fair share of the costs. But the need is urgent and we desperately need to implement at least some portions of this initiative by early June

Given this urgency, we ask that you please accommodate us as a delegation at your Council meeting on May 25, 2020 where we will outline the action plan and how the City and property owners can work together to make a difference.

Understanding Council's policy on late delegation requests, we have attached a draft Terms of Reference for the program we are proposing. We prefer to be present in person to address any questions that may come up, however, if our request to appear as a delegation is not approved, we request that Council consider making a motion to direct staff to work with us to further develop the framework and funding strategy for the program we have outlined and report back to Council for the June 15th Council meeting. Below are a few questions, and our thoughts on these questions, that may come up as you review the program:

1) How will this fit into the overall homeless strategy the City began working on earlier this year:

Recognizing that this program can only be a piece of the overall strategy, it is intended to provide residents, tenants and downtown users a consistent point of contact where they can be heard, supported and see results to improve their downtown experience and pride of place. The program will lighten the load on RCMP and Bylaw officers so they can focus on the more extreme cases as a partner

to the program. Through consistently logging of calls and case resolutions, the data gathered will further inform the larger strategy the City is working towards.

2) Why only the OCQ and not all of downtown?:

While we would agree a more cohesive approach throughout the downtown would be beneficial, we have limited the pilot version of this program to the OCQ for 3 reasons:

- The OCQ is currently the only BIA that has the ability to collect a special levy from property owners to participate in the cost of the program with the City;
- As a volunteer led initiative, we only have capacity to take on a portion of the downtown at this time;
- Before growing the program, we feel it is important to pilot it at a smaller scale so it can be quickly adjusted to suit feedback as it is received. Once stabilized, the model could be scaled to take on other portions of the downtown.

Thank you for your time in considering our requests. Please feel free to contact any one of us should you wish to discuss in advance of May 25.

Yours truly

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Appendix A: Draft Terms of Reference

Restoring security and pride of place for residents and businesses

(Second draft – May 12, 2020)

1. Situation and Objectives:

- Many residents and businesses have located in the Old City area of Nanaimo because they have appreciated the central location and the vibe that creates a unique neighbourhood
- During the last year, and particularly since February, 2020, the population of homeless citizens in the neighbourhood has appears to have steadily increased
- Particularly since February 2020, the homeless citizens have become increasingly determined to stake their ground on both private and public property
- The residents, business owners and business clients are increasingly uncomfortable with the increasing presence of the homeless together with the lack of respect shown to those residents, business owners, employees and business clients.
- Property owners are now receiving increasing concerns from their tenants about their safety some noting that they intend to leave the neighbourhood if the situation does not change quickly.
- Some businesses and government departments have chosen to relocate to out of the Downtown for security reasons with TD Auto Finance and BC Assessment being recent examples
- It has taken many years and a determined effort to build the appeal of this neighbourhood and it will be quick decline unless we act expeditiously
- While City bylaw enforcement and RCMP presence is evident, the results have not been satisfactory to our tenants.
- The property owners have decided to take the following action to protect their tenants and the reputation of the neighbourhood.

2. Night Security:

- Implement a neighbourhood wide night security patrol which will react quickly to observed security concerns and to messages of concern from tenants and property owners.
- This will be implemented prior to the end of May 2020 using a qualified security company selected by the property owners.
- The initial patrol hours will be 11:00 pm to 7:00am each night.
- The patrol will include not less than two qualified members and preferably three
- While the members of the patrol will respect the rights of homeless citizens and other citizens who create a security threat, they will be instructed to take a firm approach moving them off private property and away from threatening positions on public property while recording the incidents digitally.
- Members of the patrol will be uniformed and equipped with communication devices allowing real time communication with tenants and property owners who have security concerns.
- The messaging to and from the patrol members will be managed by a call centre which will log each message together with the action taken so that we will have a clear record of daily activities
- the members of the patrol will be provided with a base location to use as an office within the neighbourhood.

- the activity of this night security patrol will be reviewed and coordinated with the RCMP so as to make efficient use of the combined resources

3. Day Patrols and Clean-Up:

- Homeless citizen activity on private property and at threatening positions on public property is still a concern for tenants and visitors during daytime hours.
- We will endeavor to engage members of the John Howard workforce to patrol the neighbourhood, primarily to provide clean up services but also to respond to concerns raised by tenants and owners, and to record those behaviors of concern.
- The members of the day patrol will coordinate with City Bylaw Officers and the RCMP to help resolve concerns
- Day patrol members will have uniforms identifying them and will be supplied with communication devices allowing immediate messaging with the call centre and real time communication with tenants and property owners who have security concerns.

4. Ambassadors:

- as businesses open up following the COVID 19 pandemic, we will introduce neighbourhood ambassadors to help reestablish street activity and of pride of place for tenants and businesses alike
- This will be a short term program using summer students working in pairs
- They will have uniforms identifying them and their primary role will be to engage with customers and business owners to share information
- These ambassadors will not be responsible for security but will report any concerns to the call centre.

5. Tracking and Record Keeping:

- Recording and compiling information relating to incidents of concern will be a key objective of our program.
- While there have been many casual reports of concerning incidents from different sources, we will compile a specific list of reported activity, times and resolutions in order to obtain a more complete picture of the challenge we are facing.
- We will encourage all tenants and property owners to report incidents of concern
- These reports will be made available to the property owners and the City

6. Next Steps:

- The property owners recognize that this program is a necessary form of triage and not a permanent solution.
- The need to commence this program is urgent but we recognize that the specific actions will need to be amended 'on the fly' as we observe results.
- The property owners will work with the City and Provincial Government to help expedite a more permanent solution with will involve providing alternate living locations for the homeless citizens.

7. Budget and Finance:

- the property owners are obtaining proposals from security companies and input from various sources to develop a budget

- it is likely the initial budget will be in the range of \$25,000 to \$30,000 per month for the initial 6 month period
- Neighbourhood safety and security is primarily the responsibility of the City of Nanaimo and we expect the City to partner in this initiative sharing at least 50% of the cost.
- in the interest of implementing the program expeditiously and effecting a quick change for our tenants, the property owners are prepared to share up to 50% of the cost
- We propose that the portion attributable to the property owners be shared by all property owners in the neighbourhood except single family residences and based on the assessed value of their property
- We ask that the City implement an interim special levy as part of the property tax process with proportionate share of property owner cost to be based on assessed value