

DATE OF MEETING February 16, 2022

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SUBJECT DAYTIME SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report:

To provide Council with an overview of current daytime services for vulnerable populations.

BACKGROUND

At the Finance and Audit Committee on 2022-JAN-19, the Committee received a delegation from Risebridge requesting financial support for their daytime drop-in centre (Warmreach). Following the delegation the Committee passed the following motion:

“That Council direct Staff to meet with Risebridge and provide a report as soon as possible regarding the needs and options to address current gaps in daytime drop-in programming during cold weather events until March 2022.”

At Council’s meeting on 2022-FEB-07, the recommendation appeared under Consent items and was approved. This report is in response to that approved motion and is intended to provide Council with an overview of current services during cold weather events, and options to address current gaps. As previously noted, the timeframe included in the original motion will be difficult to address as any recommendations resulting from this report will not be considered by Council until the next regular meeting on 2022-FEB-28.

DISCUSSION

In mid December of 2021, Risebridge opened an emergency warming Centre (Warmreach) in a donated space at 380 Terminal Ave. Risebridge has stated that the warming centre was in response to the need in the community and specifically to fill a void that was created when the SEIA warming space on Wallace Street was suddenly required to close their doors.

Representatives for the owner of 380 Terminal Avenue originally advised that the space was being donated for the months of December and January. On 2022-JAN-19, the building manager advised City Staff that the warming centre had been requested to discontinue use of the building as of 2022-JAN-21. Warmreach closed their doors and discontinued the warming centre at 380 Terminal Avenue on 2022-JAN-21.

With the closure of Warmreach warming centre at 380 Terminal, the current daytime drop-in spaces and indoor services for vulnerable populations are as outlined in Attachment A. |

Input from Service Providers

As per Council's direction, Staff have met with representatives from Risebridge.

Risebridge has recently successfully relocated their operations to 520 Prideaux Street. Although the new location does not provide the previous service of a warming centre, Risebridge has confirmed that they do provide support for 16 clients. This support is in addition to the existing services that Risebridge was previously providing to youth and families. With additional funding Risebridge is of the opinion that additional capacity could be created at the site.

In addition to the above, Risebridge has been operating on occasion a resource tent in the downtown core near the intersection of Albert Street and Victoria Crescent. Risebridge stated that this service is well used and that during a recent Saturday opening (from 10am -3pm) the resource tent saw 108 unique clients.

Risebridge representatives did state that in their opinion, many of the existing services are too high barrier for the many people and that COVID has placed additional strain on those operations.

Further comments from Risebridge are included here as Attachment B.

In addition to meeting with Risebridge, Staff also met with representatives from those agencies that are currently providing indoor daytime services within the downtown (Canadian Mental Health Association, Salvation Army, The 7-10 Club, and the Unitarian Church). The agency representatives generally agreed that the existing services have not been sufficient to meet the existing demand for many years, and that increased demand has further strained the existing systems.

In discussions with service providers, it was noted that access to appropriate space is the biggest barrier to providing an enhanced level of service. It was felt that the identification of a building or buildings would be key in establishing a successful and properly integrated resource centre for vulnerable populations.

All parties noted that partnerships between service providers and agencies were key to the success of any future program.

City Funding and Current Direction

In 2018, Council included \$100,000 in the annual budget to support the establishment of a daytime drop-in resource centre. It was recognized at the time that \$100,000 would not be sufficient to fund a properly established service and that partnerships would be required. The \$100,000 remained in the annual budget for 2019 and 2020. These unspent funds were carried forward in subsequent years and have been used by Council to fund various initiatives including the 2021 Salvation Army Breakfast Program (\$39,615.25) and the Cold Weather Shelter (allocated \$15,000). At present, there remains \$193,058.78 of unallocated carry forward.

In the fall of 2019, Staff provided a report to the Health and Housing Task Force recommending that an Expression of Interest be issued to identify opportunities to provide or expand existing daytime drop in services, as the City had been unsuccessful in securing the necessary

partnerships to properly fund a resource centre. The Task Force did not endorse that recommendation.

As Council is aware, the work of the Health and Housing Task Force resulted in an action plan and a recommendation to establish a Systems Planning Organization (SPO). The intent of the SPO is to oversee the implementation of the plan and to assist with coordinating all groups and agencies currently working to support vulnerable populations and to reduce homelessness. The establishment of the SPO is currently in progress. In 2021 and 2022, Council has included \$480,000 in the annual budget to support the establishment and work of the SPO.

In addition to the above, Council also has approximately \$3.08M available within the existing Housing Legacy Reserve Fund. While this fund has been utilized at different times for operations, it is primarily intended to support the development of permanent housing.

OPTIONS

As per Council's direction, Staff have identified the following options for addressing the current gaps in daytime drop in programming during cold weather events:

1. Maintain Current Direction – Council has acted on the recommendations of the Health and Housing Task force and is supporting the establishment of a Systems Planning Organization to implement the plan and to coordinate efforts. In the absence of further direction from Council, this work will continue.

Financial Implications: The current financial plan includes \$480,000 in the 2022 budget for this work. As such, there are no additional financial implications because of this option.

Motion: No motion is required as this work is currently underway.

2. Expression of Interest (EOI) - Council could consider proceeding with an EOI as was previously contemplated. This option would provide the opportunities for one or more agencies to respond with proposals on how they could respond to the demand for daytime drop-in services if additional funding were provided by the City. Given the timeframe required for this proposal, it would not result in additional services for this season but could identify opportunities for the 2022/23 winter season.

Financial Implications: At present, there remains \$193,058.78 of unallocated carryforward from the previous \$100,000 annual resource centre funding that was in the previous 2018-20 annual budgets. If Council wishes to proceed with this option, Staff would recommend \$100,000 be allocated at this time. As there are sufficient existing unallocated funds, there are no new financial implications as result of this option.

Motion: *“That Council direct Staff to proceed with an Expression of Interest for daytime resource centre services for community members who are homeless and street-involved in Nanaimo with a proposed budget of \$100,000 to be funded from the 2018-20 daytime resource centre carry forward.”*

3. Convert emergency warming shelter to daily drop-in space. Given the short time frame, the best opportunity to respond to the existing need for daytime drop-in space this season is by expanding the current service provided by the Emergency Warming Centre

at Caledonia Park. As noted above, Council supported the establishment of this service in late 2021 and is currently being operated by the 7-10 Club. As an emergency shelter, the facility is only open on those days deemed a cold weather day. By converting the emergency shelter to a daily drop-in shelter, the facility could be open every day for the remainder of the season. The current operator has confirmed that they have capacity to provide this service.

Financial Implications: Council previously allocated up to \$15,000 for the operation of this service. At the time of this report there is \$5,200 remaining in the budget. If Council wishes to proceed with this option, an approximate additional \$15,000 will be required.

Motion: *“That Council designate the existing Caledonia emergency warming Centre as a daily drop-in space until 2022-APR-01, and allocate \$15,000 from the 2018-20 daytime resource centre carry forward.”*

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Finance and Audit Committee received a delegation from Risebridge requesting financial support of the warming centre located at 380 Terminal Avenue.
- The Risebridge warming shelter (Warmbridge) discontinued service on 2022-JAN-21.
- The remaining warming centres and indoor services for vulnerable populations have been in demand during the recent cold weather.
- Based on the recommendation of the Health and Housing Task Force, the City is currently focused on establishing and funding a Systems Planning Organization.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A: Current Daytime Drop-in Spaces and Indoor Services
ATTACHMENT B: Risebridge Comments |

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