

MINUTES
GOVERNANCE AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE MEETING
SHAW AUDITORIUM, VANCOUVER ISLAND CONFERENCE CENTRE,
80 COMMERCIAL STREET, NANAIMO, BC
MONDAY, 2023-MAR-27, AT 1:00 P.M.

- Present: Councillor I. Thorpe, Chair
Mayor L. Krog
Councillor S. Armstrong
Councillor H. Eastmure
Councillor B. Geselbracht
Councillor E. Hemmens
Councillor P. Manly
Councillor J. Perrino (joined electronically)
- Absent: Councillor T. Brown
- Staff: J. Rudolph, Chief Administrative Officer
D. Lindsay, General Manager, Development Services/Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
B. Sims, General Manager, Engineering and Public Works
L. Fletcher, OIC, Nanaimo Detachment RCMP
A. Burton, Inspector, Nanaimo Detachment RCMP
T. Doyle, Fire Chief
J. Le Masurier, Deputy Fire Chief
J. Elliot, Director, Public Works
L. Bhopalsingh, Director, Community Development
R. Harding, Director, Parks, Recreation and Culture
K. Ing, Director, IT/CIO (joined electronically)
L. Brinkman, Manager, Community Planning
D. Laberge, Manager, Bylaw Services
T. Webb, Manager, Communications (joined electronically)
C. Wood, Social Planner
K. Biegun, Planner
E. Dixon, Planning Assistant
S. Gurrie, Director, Legislative Services
N. Sponaugle, Communications Advisor
A. Chanakos, Steno, Legislative Services
E. Bassett, Recording Secretary

1. CALL THE GOVERNANCE AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE MEETING TO ORDER:

The Governance and Priorities Committee Meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

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

3. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES:

It was moved and seconded that the Minutes of the Governance and Priorities Committee Meeting held in the Shaw Auditorium, Vancouver Island Conference Centre, 80 Commercial Street, Nanaimo, BC, on Monday, 2023-MAR-13 at 11:00 a.m. be adopted as circulated. The motion carried unanimously.

4. AGENDA PLANNING:

1. Governance and Priorities Committee Agenda Planning

Sheila Gurrie, Director, Legislative Services, introduced a schedule of upcoming Governance and Priorities Committee meetings.

Committee and Staff discussion took place regarding the topic of Neighbourhood Associations returning to a future Governance and Priorities Committee meeting. It was noted that there will be an engagement session with Neighbourhood Associations on 2023-APR-26 outside of the GPC format.

5. REPORTS:

a. COMMUNITY WELLNESS/LIVABILITY:

1. Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan Update

Introduced by Dale Lindsay, General Manager, Development Services/Deputy CAO.

Presentation:

Dave LaBerge, Manager, Bylaw Services, provided an update on the Downtown Community Safety Action Plan. Highlights included:

- The Downtown Community Safety Action Plan brought \$2.5 million in annual investments to the downtown to provide new and enhanced resources downtown, focusing on public safety and cleanliness;
- In 2021, Nielsen Consultants were assigned to consult with the community and report back their findings;
- The findings recognized that the situation downtown was acute and there was an imperative need for quick action in response to the serious challenges that were impacting downtown;
- The desire was to provide alternative responses other than RCMP response;
- Other goals were to make businesses and residents feel connected and supported by cutting down the wait time for responses, and to provide similar supports to make the unhoused feel supported and connected;
- The Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Plan consists of three groups of measures:

- Tiered Response - The tiered approach consists of creating a new tier of responses such as the Community Safety Officers (CSOs);
- Public Spaces & Assets - The public spaces and assets plan includes programs that keep public spaces and infrastructure clean, safe, and accessible to everyone;
- Action Plan Governance - Action plan governance consists of providing a system of governance, understanding that the plan will not be static and will evolve as the conditions continue to change downtown;
- The twelve Community Safety Officers (CSOs) hired have a diverse background, not only in enforcement but also in various social services and clinical outreach;
- They are trained to de-escalate conflict and minimize the necessity for police interventions;
- The CSOs are the most consistent group on the street at any time doing proactive foot and bike patrols for 19.5 hours a day, seven days a week, from 6 a.m. to 1:30 a.m.;
- One of the key goals of the CSOs is to provide responses within 30 minutes of calls;
- Some of the work the CSOs having been doing includes providing points of entry for engagement for the services in town including shelters, warming centres, shower programs, and overdose prevention sites;
- Since 2022-OCT-01, the CSOs have responded to 3,465 unique calls;
- In 2019, the City implemented a Clean Team Project that included two sanitation workers and a truck used to shadow the Bylaw Officers to focus on the downtown cleanliness;
- The City received funding to make two full time Clean Teams permanent, providing coverage seven days a week;
- Industrial waste garbage vacuums and two custom trucks have been ordered that are designed to include onboard pressure washers and generators to address the sanitation issue more efficiently;
- The Vandalism Relief Grant provides property owners with quick assistance to repair damage caused by vandalism, break ins, or graffiti;
- On 2022-OCT-01, the City entered a service agreement with the Chamber of Commerce that implemented a system in place to provide funding up to \$1,000 per property owner, for up to two claims in a calendar year. During the last three months of 2022, a total of \$8,805 was dispersed for 12 incidents;
- The City manages three parkade facilities downtown with a total of 901 parking stalls;
- A security assessment was conducted in the fall of 2022 to get recommendations to reduce the vulnerabilities in the parkades;
- \$225,000 worth of CCTV infrastructure is planned to be installed in the summer of 2023 to the Port of Nanaimo and Harbourfront parkades;
- Staff are looking at the possibility of an operational command centre that would provide real time camera monitoring and event-based responses in cases of intrusions and other threats; and,

- An access control system is being considered by Staff which would include entrance gating to secure facilities for overnight parkers and to increase a more thorough maintenance program.

Committee and Staff discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Programs are in place to put garbage out the morning of collection, not overnight, mainly for bear prevention;
- Public Works and the Sanitation Department requested additional patrols by Bylaw Officers on the evenings prior to garbage pickup to ensure residents are not putting their garbage out overnight;
- The Community Safety Officers and the Bylaw Officers are routinely going through many of the known encampments along with the RCMP;
- It is difficult for enforcement to determine what is a discarded item and what is a valuable item that is potentially stolen;
- Costs associated with using CCTV systems versus on site personnel;
- Police are required to have a warrant to enter tents because they are considered homes;
- The public can contact the CSOs during business hours by calling the Bylaw Department, or after hours by calling the Public Works Department;
- Statistics are not kept on naloxone administration; and,
- The narrative from the CSOs experiences is important.

Jake Rudolph, Chief Administrative Officer, advised the Committee that there has been discussion regarding a one-year audit to show the effectiveness of the Community Safety Officers program. He noted that since hiring the CSOs, Bylaw Officers have been able to deploy more effectively to other areas around the City.

Committee and Staff discussion continued. Highlights included:

- CSOs have brought a lot of benefit to the housed and unhoused people;
- Having the CSOs focused exclusively on homelessness allows Bylaw Officers to complete their other regular duties; and,
- An agreement with the CUPE union allows the CSO program to provide coverage 24 hours a day depending on what is needed.

Lisa Fletcher, OIC, Nanaimo Detachment RCMP, advised the Committee of a strong connection between the Community Safety Officers, Bylaw, and RCMP. Knowing that the CSOs are very accessible downtown has given the RCMP the opportunity to focus other parts of town.

2. Community Safety and Security

Introduced by Dale Lindsay, General Manager, Development Services/Deputy CAO.

Presentation:

Christy Wood, Social Planner, provided an update on City initiatives and programs that work to address community safety and security. Highlights included:

- The City has an important impact on the work that is done on the root causes of crime and social disorder;
- The Public Works team is recognized for dealing directly with social disorder and the work they do around vandalism and prevention; and,
- The purpose of the report is to show the different kinds of impact that downstream, midstream, and upstream programs have on community safety and initiative.

Christy Wood, Social Planner, provided a presentation regarding downstream initiatives and programs. Highlights included:

- Downstream approaches are immediate responses to urgent incidents that happen in the community;
- Some of the downstream work that the City does is in response to homelessness;
- The City received \$2.5 million dollars in 2021 (Round 1) and \$625,000 in 2022 (Round 2) through the Strengthening Communities and Services Program;
- Round 1 funds are being distributed by Staff to support different initiatives including the shower program, expansion of additional downtown clean up, security services, and portable toilets;
- Round 2 funds are currently supporting a morning meal program, extreme cold and general daytime warming services, and outreach services for the Snuneymuxw First Nation members experiencing homelessness;
- Risebridge and Nanaimo 7-10 Club Society are supporting an average of 55-60 individuals daily with warming services;
- The Unitarian Shelter provided shelter to an average of 18 individuals daily during extreme weather events from December to February;
- The Salvation Army provided 6,206 breakfast meals between November and the end of January;
- City Staff were able to coordinate and distribute just over \$332,000 from the Strengthening Communities and Services Program, and accessed funds from the Emergency Management Climate Readiness to provide the winter response;
- The City partnered with the Unitarian Shelter in 2018 to start a shower program which currently runs Monday to Friday from 7 a.m. to 12 p.m.;
- Between 2017-2022 the City provided just over \$246,000 to fund a Urban Clean-up Program in response to social issues and downtown concerns around garbage and discarded needles;

- The City funded the John Howard Society to provide the Urban Clean-up program and it was used as an employment skill-based program for people who are transitioning out of correctional facilities or homelessness;
- The Urban Clean-up program ended in 2022 as a request by the operator because there were other employment opportunities for their clients to explore and the increase of garbage was becoming too much for the small crew to handle;
- City Staff are currently updating the Surviving Nanaimo Guide;
- Nanaimo Fire Rescue (NFR) plays a key role in responding to issues of community safety and security;
- Last year NFR responded to 10,000 incidents including fires, hazardous material emergencies, technical rescues, vehicle accidents, and medical calls;
- NFR is collaborating with BC Centre for Disease Control as one of the first Fire Departments to participate in the take home naloxone kit program; and,
- In 2022, Council supported the addition of 4 Downtown Safety Enforcement Officers and 15 RCMP officers.

Christy Wood, Social Planner, provided a presentation regarding midstream initiatives and programs. Highlights included:

- Midstream approaches to community safety and security incorporate risk intervention strategies that target groups at a higher risk.
- They work to respond to elevated risk situations to mitigate harm and decrease the likelihood of victimization or trauma;
- Parks, Recreation and Culture partnered with Island Health to support youth at risk with a Wellness Centre at the Nanaimo Aquatic Centre;
- The Health and Housing Action Plan is a midstream approach that is providing a 5-year road map to support the needs of those at risk or facing vulnerable circumstances;
- Council is contributing \$500,000 over 5 years to a system planning organization to ensure strategic direction is being taken around coordination, accurate data collection, research, and education;
- The Community Policing Program provides community-based crime prevention and community policing initiatives;
- In 2023 the City provided just over \$129,000 to the Community Policing Program;
- Through round 1 of the Strengthening Communities Program, the program is funding 12 studio housing units and 6 scattered site housing units in partnership with Snuneymuxw First Nation;
- Round 2 of the Strengthening Communities Program is funding the lease of a second vehicle for the Community Policing Program to provide additional crime watch;
- In January 2023, the City launched its situation table in partnership with the Provincial Government;
- A \$30,000 grant was received to provide training for the situation table participants of the situation table; and,

- A situation table is a proactive hub that brings frontline staff to the table so that they can respond quickly and effectively to a high-risk situation.

Christy Wood, Social Planner, provided a presentation regarding upstream initiatives and programs. Highlights included:

- Upstream approaches are about creating communities where everyone has equal opportunity to grow, work, play, and be valued;
- Protective factors such as positive social skills, strong relationships, access to recreational activities, volunteering, or other social determined health indicators like housing, employment, and education all create an environment that reduces crime and victimization;
- The City's Parks, Recreation and Culture division supports upstream initiatives by providing safe gathering spaces, programs, and events for a diverse group of people;
- The leisure economic access pass ensures families who face financial barriers can access recreation and positive development programs;
- Parks, Recreation and Culture staff are actively supporting children by providing the opportunity to be engaged in positive programming, as well as acting as mentors and navigators connecting youth to other service providers in the community;
- The affordable housing strategy and City Plan provides a framework for the City to facilitate the development of affordable housing;
- The City established an MOU with BC Housing to support the building of affordable housing units;
- The City created and implemented the short-term rental regulation to help reduce the pressures on the rental market;
- In 2021, the City launched their first rent bank;
- Staff will be back at the end of the year to present additional affordable housing initiatives to Council;
- The City supports the Social Planning Grant Program which supports organizations, responds to social issues, and supports programs that enhance social cohesion, address the root causes and effects of poverty, and contributes to the vitality of our community annually;
- Last year, Council adopted the Neighbourhood Association Supports Policy and committed \$10,000 annually through the grant program to encourage healthy and vibrant neighbourhoods which are key to community safety and security; and,
- In 2022, the City was allocated \$1.8 million to develop and implement a strategic plan to prevent gun and gang violence in Nanaimo.

Committee and Staff discussion took place. Highlights included:

- The City must complete the upstream work in order to make a difference; however, as a society people tend to focus more on the downstream crisis response;
- The City is advocating for support from the Provincial and Federal Government;
- The report does not reflect the advocacy work being done;

- The situation table is meant to serve not only the homeless, but also the whole community including youth, seniors, and families to reduce the risk of eviction, victimization, and more;
- There are 24 service organizations at the situation table;
- Working towards further coordinated access;
- The situation table being connected to a Provincial database tracking risk factors;
- Future plans with SFN to continue program implemented there through the Strengthening Communities Program once funding terminates summer 2023; and,
- No secured funding for ongoing operations of the units currently; however, the City continues to seek a third round of funding if eligible.

Jake Rudolph, Chief Administrative Officer, advised the Committee that Council has previously flagged advocacy as an important topic during their Strategic Plan workshops. Advocacy is not a new topic, and that Council has chosen a quiet advocacy approach in the past in order to maintain relationships.

Committee and Staff discussion continued regarding Nanaimo Systems Planning Organization (SPO) and the Health and Housing Action Plan. It was noted that the Strategic Priorities document is scheduled to come back to Council at the Governance and Priorities Committee meeting at the end of April.

The Governance and Priorities Committee recessed the meeting at 2:45 p.m.
The Governance and Priorities Committee reconvened the meeting at 3:01 p.m.

3. Draft Integrated Action Plan and Draft Priority Actions – A Healthy & Empowered Nanaimo

Introduced by Dale Lindsay, General Manager, Development Services/Deputy CAO.

Presentation:

Lisa Bhopalsingh, Director, Community Development, introduced the Draft Integrated Action Plan. (Kasia Biegun, Planner, launched a series of Zoom polls on draft priority actions.)

A Zoom poll was launched related to community safety and security in the Draft Integrated Action Plan Priority Actions – A Healthy Nanaimo.

A Zoom poll was launched related to affordable housing in the Draft Integrated Action Plan Priority Actions – A Healthy Nanaimo

Committee discussion took place regarding public hearings in relation to rezoning applications, the City's support for affordable housing, and the Park Avenue Concept Plan.

A Zoom poll was launched related to intergenerational living in the Draft Integrated Action Plan - A Healthy Nanaimo.

Committee discussion took place regarding working with Island Health to create a memory clinic at a City facility. Staff will return to Council with an updated report on what they are trying to achieve.

A Zoom poll was launched related to food security in the Draft Integrated Action Plan - A Healthy Nanaimo.

Committee discussion took place regarding who is responsible for stocking the fish in local lakes and how it is paid for. It was noted that there is no budget or staffing implications for integrating fishing features into the design of future boardwalks and that it is inexpensive, healthy, and good for the community.

A Zoom poll was launched related to emergency management and recreation, culture, and wellness in the Draft Integrated Action Plan Priority Actions – A Healthy Nanaimo.

A Zoom poll was launched related to recreation, culture, and wellness in the Draft Integrated Action Plan Priority Actions – A Healthy Nanaimo.

It was moved and seconded that the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council not support the approach to evaluating the remaining Draft Priority Actions and proposed schedule as outlined in the Staff report dated 2023-MAR-27 titled “Draft Integrated Action Plan – A Healthy & Empowered Nanaimo.” The motion carried unanimously.

6. QUESTION PERIOD:

Council received no questions from the public regarding agenda items.

7. ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved and seconded at 4:43 p.m. that the meeting terminate. The motion carried unanimously.

CHAIR

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

CORPORATE OFFICER