

DATE OF MEETING DECEMBER 18, 2023

AUTHORED BY CHRISTY WOOD, MANAGER, SOCIAL PLANNING

SUBJECT **WARMING CENTRE PARTNERSHIP WITH ISLAND HEALTH**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report:

To provide Council with an update on funding from Island Health to provide additional supports to three City funded warming centres.

BACKGROUND

At a Special Council Meeting on 2023-NOV-01, the following motion was passed:

1. *“Direct Staff to reallocate up to \$230,000 from the Asset Retirement Obligation project surplus to fund warming centre services approximately between November 14, 2023 and March 31, 2024 , 7 days per week; and,*
2. *Authorize the Mayor and Corporate Officer to enter into a service agreement with Risebridge Society to:*
 - a. *Provide warming centre services during the identified service gaps*
 - b. *Mitigate impacts on the surrounding neighbourhood through good neighbourhood agreement requirements*
3. *That a further call for expressions of interest be posted for organizations willing and able to run an additional warming centre in Nanaimo; and*
4. *If an additional site is found, that additional funds be identified.”*

The City entered into a service agreement with Risebridge Society (Risebridge) to provide a warming centre between 2023-NOV-14 and 2024-MAR-31, 7 days per week between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. The service agreement allows the warming centre to expand services during extreme cold weather thresholds as set by the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) when staffing capacity and EMCR resources allow, and contains good neighbour commitments.

On 2023-NOV-06, the City released a call for Expressions of Interests (EOI) for service providers who are willing and able to operate an additional warming centre. In addition, a press release was issued on 2023-NOV-09 stating the City’s need for another warming centre. The City received one EOI from Island Crisis Care Society (ICCS). The 7-10 Club Society (7-10 Club) submitted an EOI after the deadline. After review of the proposals, Council directed Staff to enter into a service agreement with ICCS and the 7-10 Club.

In preparation for the implementation of warming centre services, Staff notified key community stakeholders to gather input on the terms of the good neighbourhood commitments to be incorporated in the service agreement with operators. Presently, Staff are negotiating the service agreements with ICCS and the 7-10 Club. Once service agreements are complete, operators will

inform residents and businesses residing within 100 metres of the warming centre services to be provided. In addition, operators will provide contact information allowing residents to contact the operator if there is a concern related to the warming centre operations.

Approximately 138 unsheltered individuals will have daily access to three City-funded warming centres for the 2023/2024 winter season:

- 520 Prideaux Street operated by Risebridge Society - up to 48 people at one time, 7 days per week, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., between November 14, 2023 and March 31, 2024;
- 5 Victoria Road operated by the 7-10 Club Society – up to 30 people at one time, 7 days per week, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., between December 22, 2023 and March 31, 2024; and,
- 2025 Bowen Road operated by Island Crisis Care Society – up to 60 people at one time, 7 days per week, 12 p.m. to 7 p.m., between January 2, 2024 to March 31, 2024.

The provision of warming centre services is not a service the City of Nanaimo provides, however, in past years the City has helped to ensure these services can be offered during the winter season or extreme weather events by applying for grants, offering temporary spaces, and providing funds to support community groups who are able to offer these services. For example, last year the City successfully secured a grant of \$625,000 from the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) 2022 Strengthening Communities Services Program. This included \$299,300 to support a daytime cold and hot extreme weather service (including general daytime warming) for homeless individuals.

DISCUSSION

Risebridge reports that the warming centre at 520 Prideaux Street has been operating at or near capacity since opening. The warming centre at Risebridge is supported by four employees who manage the service however they report that there are safety and security challenges due to substance use and overdose incidents occurring onsite. Risebridge staff have reached out to Island Health requesting funding for additional staffing to address these issues.

In response to the challenges at Risebridge, the increase number of people living unsheltered, and the current state of the opiate crisis, Island Health has informed the City that they will contribute up to \$250,000 to support the three City funded warming centres. These funds will be given to the City to address any service gaps for the three warming centre services. Staff propose to utilize the funds to address the increase in overdose incidents at warming centres and provide additional supports to mitigate impacts in the neighborhood. Any remaining Island Health funds will be used to recover funds used in the City's Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund.

The opening of the additional warming centres may reduce demand and challenges experienced at the Risebridge warming centre and the availability of warming centres will provide options for unsheltered individuals who find the Risebridge warming centre unsuitable to their needs.

CONCLUSION

Additional funding from Island Health will support service gaps at the three City funded warming centres. The addition of two more warming centres may reduce demand and challenges experienced at the Risebridge warming centre. The availability of additional warming centres will close gaps in times in which overnight shelters and the Risebridge Warming Centre are operating.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The City has entered into a service agreement with Risebridge Society to fund warming centre services from 2023-NOV-14 to 2024-MAR-31, 7 days per week from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Staff are negotiating service agreements with Island Crisis Care Society and the 7-10 Club Society to provide two additional warming centres for the Winter 2023/2024 season.
- Island Health will contribute up to \$250,000 in funds to the City to address any service gaps for the three warming centre services.

Submitted by:

David Laberge
Director, Public Safety

Concurrence by:

Richard Harding
General Manager, Community Services /
Deputy CAO

Dale Lindsay
CAO