



## MINUTES

### GOVERNANCE AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, December 11, 2023, 12:59 P.M.  
SHAW AUDITORIUM, VANCOUVER ISLAND CONFERENCE CENTRE  
80 COMMERCIAL STREET, NANAIMO, BC

- Members: Councillor H. Eastmure, Chair  
Mayor L. Krog (vacated 3:43 p.m.)  
Councillor S. Armstrong  
Councillor B. Geselbracht\* (joined electronically 1:00 p.m.)  
Councillor E. Hemmens  
Councillor P. Manly  
Councillor J. Perrino  
Councillor I. Thorpe (vacated 4:11 p.m.)
- Absent: Councillor T. Brown
- Staff: R. Harding, General Manager, Community Services/Deputy CAO  
B. Sims, General Manager, Engineering and Public Works  
T. Doyle, Fire Chief  
K. Robertson, Deputy Corporate Officer  
N. Sponaugle, Communications Advisor  
A. Chanakos, Recording Secretary

1. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER:

The Governance and Priorities Committee Meeting was called to order at 12:59 p.m.

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS:

- (a) Agenda Item 5(b) Solutions to Addiction, Mental Illness and Homelessness Add – PowerPoint presentation titled “Homelessness, Mental Illness and Evidence to Inform Improvement”.

- (b) Agenda Item 5(c) Nanaimo Community Action Team Add – PowerPoint presentation titled “2023 Nanaimo Community Action Team Overview”.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

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

4. PRESENTATIONS:

a. Drug Toxicity Data

Dr. Shannon Waters, Medical Health Officer, Dr. Roger Walmsley, Island Health Addiction Medicine Physician, Amanda Lemon, MHSU Manager of Community Services in Nanaimo and Area, and Dana Leik, Director, Island Health, provided a presentation on Drug Toxicity Data. Highlights included:

- Island Health provides different services and levels of intervention for different levels of the population
- As of 2023-OCT-31, BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) has attended 964 illicit drug poisonings, which is double the rate of the rest of Island Health
- An average of 89 paramedic-attended events have occurred per month in 2023, with the highest rate being in males aged 25-44 years
- Most toxic drug events are occurring outdoors and in the downtown area
- The overdose rate in Nanaimo has increased 1.7 times from 2022, while remaining stable across the rest of Island Health
- In the first 10 months of 2023, 99 Nanaimo residents have lost their lives due to illicit drug toxicity, which is double the rate as the rest of Island Health
- An average of 10 deaths per month occur in BC due to illicit drug toxicity, with the highest rate being in males aged 25-44 years
- Deaths in Nanaimo are occurring at a rate of 2.7 times higher than the rest of Island Health, with an increase in outdoor deaths

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Island Health is looking at what has changed in the past year and what can be done to help those demographics being affected most
- The volume of individuals utilizing the overdose prevention site (OPS) at 250 Albert Street has been increasing, and Island Health is

looking at working with the operator, Canadian Mental Health Association, to increase the site's hours of operation

- Island Health is working with the City and BC Housing to identify a location for complex care housing to offer services to those with addictions
- Demographics are not collected at overdose prevention sites to make them as low barrier as possible to use
- Point-in-Time data shows a significant increase in people living unsheltered compared to 2020, and the number of available shelter beds is significantly lower than the number of unsheltered people
- OPS services are difficult to operate and find a location for, and it can be challenging to add additional sites
- Island Health is seeing an increase in elderly people and people without substance use issues facing homelessness, with many of these individuals turning to substance use as a way to survive on the streets
- Only 5% of those with opiate use disorder are getting safe supply
- No data is available to support the idea that long-term committal care improves the outcomes of substance use
- The *Mental Health Act* limits how substance use services are delivered in the community; however, when people are in a place where services can come to them regularly, health outcomes improve
- Island Health is advocating for education in the school systems to support mental health needs for children and youth
- The number of first-time substance users has increased, and more first-time users are dying due to contaminated drugs
- Island Health's Regional Harm Reduction Teams will be providing advanced overdose response training to Risebridge staff, as well as harm reduction supplies going forward
- Harm reduction advocacy work in schools would be more effective if done by health experts and past drug users, rather than the RCMP

b. Solutions to Addiction, Mental Illness and Homelessness

Dr. Julian Somers, SFU Professor of Health Sciences and Clinical Psychologist, provided a presentation on Solutions to Addiction, Mental Illness and Homelessness. Highlights included:

- Concerned regarding gaps in the Province's policies and their effectiveness

- The policy approach in BC has been unusual and in conflict with recommendations from international authorities
- There is a far greater likelihood of quality of life and long-term recovery when people are supported in their communities
- Community-based and recovery-oriented supports encourage an individual's agency
- Market housing with support is a concept where a maximum of 5% of housing units are supportive housing units, to ensure social diversity for those recovering from addiction
- 84% of unsheltered individuals have a preference for independent housing
- The cost to the public to support an unsheltered individual each year while homeless in BC is about \$55,000
- Recovery-oriented housing, paired with allowing individuals a choice of where they lived, saw 71% fewer convictions in a year, 45% less emergency department visits, and individuals were more likely to be compliant to take prescribed medications
- Congregate housing is ineffective as it is too reminiscent to living on the streets compared to scattered housing

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Placing people in a setting where they can develop organic human connections increases the likelihood of long-term success
- 1/3 of people diagnosed with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, paired with many years of methadone use, are unemployed, living in substandard housing and are receiving inadequate additional supports
- Concentrating people together who are recovering from addiction increases crime in the area
- Increasing scattered market housing and insisting on standards for congregate housing that link people to services are fundamental to success
- Funding should be allocated to securing long-term units in the private market, rather than more supportive housing
- Stigma often deters people from getting help with addictions
- Reducing stigma around drug use, reducing sanctions relating to drug use, or increasing overall supply of drugs will not result in improvement without other substantial changes

The Governance and Priorities Committee recessed the meeting at 2:58 pm

The Governance and Priorities Committee reconvened the meeting at 3:13 pm

c. Nanaimo Community Action Team

Serena Klaver, Coordinator, and Qui Sepulveda, Peer Coordinator, Nanaimo Community Acton Team, to provide a presentation on the Nanaimo Community Action Team. Highlights included:

- The Community Action Team (CAT) was first established in 2016, and there are now a total of 36 CATs across BC
- The Nanaimo CAT received \$80,000 in funding for 2023
- CATs operate with a peer-centred approach
- The Nanaimo CAT is a network of community service providers, not-for-profit organizations, government agencies, healthcare providers, community members and people with lived experience
- Finding ways to take what we know and implement on the ground are things the CAT is trying to do
- Peer-centred collective impact is an empowerment approach to try to heal the suffering in the community of those connected to the toxic drug crisis

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Lack of available services, funding and capacity are contributing to the high number of toxic drug deaths
- A closer relationship with Council, RCMP and firefighters would assist the CAT in helping each other to support individuals living on the street

Mayor Krog vacated the Shaw Auditorium at 3:43 p.m.

- The Nanaimo CAT is working with warming shelters to determine where supports can be offered
- The Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions holds the funding for the CAT, which is streamlined through the Canadian Mental Health Association and distributed to CATs across BC

5. AGENDA PLANNING:

a. Upcoming Topics and Initiatives

Karen Robertson, Deputy Corporate Officer, spoke regarding topics and initiatives scheduled for upcoming Governance and Priorities Committee (GPC) meetings. Highlights included:

- Development Approval Process Review has been rescheduled to 2024-JAN-22
- Presentation from Dave Witty and the eMobility topic have been rescheduled to 2024-FEB-12

Committee and Staff discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Request to move the Nanaimo Operations Centre (NOC) Project information session to an earlier date prior to the 2024-JAN-18 Alternative Approval Process (AAP) start date
- A Special GPC meeting held during the evening would be preferred so the public could attend
- A “Get Involved” page for the NOC will be set up as a way to share project information with the community
- The Active Transportation Update will include the eMobility Strategy, as well as discussions around what projects are still outstanding for active transportation in the core area of the City

It was moved and seconded that Council direct Staff to schedule a Special evening Governance and Priorities Committee meeting prior to January 18, 2024, for the purpose of reviewing the Nanaimo Operations Centre. The motion carried unanimously.

Committee and Staff discussion continued. Highlights included:

- Advertising for AAPs needs to be consistent and cannot promote one outcome over another
- A mass mailout to advertise for the AAP would cost approximately \$30,000; however, the AAP budget currently sits at \$10,000 per year, with any overage being pulled from the Referendum budget
- A media tour is scheduled for January 2024, as well as open houses at the Public Works Yard in January, information on the “Get Involved” website, radio and newspaper ads, and information posted at City facilities

Councillor Thorpe vacated the Shaw Auditorium at 4:11 p.m.

It was moved and seconded that the Governance and Priorities Committee (GPC) recommend that Council direct Staff to remove the Nanaimo Operations Centre discussion topic from the 2024-JAN-22 GPC meeting schedule and replace it with “Alternate Approval Process Review”. The motion carried unanimously

6. REPORTS:

a. Prosperous Nanaimo:

1. 2024 Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Resolutions

Introduced by Karen Robertson, Deputy Corporate Officer.

- Each year the Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities (AVICC) provides opportunities for Councils to bring forward resolutions for consideration
- Resolutions supported at the AVICC conference are referred to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) conference for consideration. If supported at UBCM, they are forwarded to the Province
- The deadline to submit AVICC resolutions is 2024-FEB-07, and must be considered with a formal motion from Council

Committee and Staff discussion took place, and the following resolution topics were put forward by the Committee for consideration:

- That UBCM lobby the Province to increase investment in complex care beds to address the growing demand for those who have suffered serious health impacts from substance abuse.
- That AVICC advocate for the Province to fund RCMP Mental Health liaison Officers within local detachments.
- That AVICC lobby the Province to establish a Provincial Housing Coordinator to work directly with those persons who are experiencing homelessness and who are not in need of supports, to find suitable housing.
- Advocating for provincial funding for municipalities to protect areas within urban containment boundaries that are ecologically sensitive.

The Deputy Corporate Officer conveyed that the Director of Planning and Development would be bringing forward a proposed resolution for Council's consideration on the topic of emergency shelters and compliance with the BC Building Code and BC Fire Code. She then noted that Staff would draft resolutions based on the topics provided that meet the required format for the Committee's consideration on

January 22, 2024. If supported, the resolutions would then be forwarded to Council for endorsement at its February 5, 2024 Council meeting.

7. QUESTION PERIOD:

The Committee received no questions from the public regarding agenda items.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved and seconded at 4:21 p.m. that the meeting adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

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CHAIR

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

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CORPORATE OFFICER