



MINUTES

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, December 18, 2024, 4:00 P.M.
Boardroom, Service and Resource Centre
411 Dunsmuir Street, Nanaimo, BC

Members:

Councillor Armstrong
Councillor Eastmure
Scott Brodie, At Large Member
Doug Cowling, At Large Member
Destiny Herman, At Large Member
Collen Middleton, At Large Member
Ruth Taylor, At Large Member

Absent:

James Bowen, At Large Member
Kim Coulthard, At Large Member
Kevin Lambert, At Large Member
Jennifer Millbank, At Large Member

Staff:

D. LaBerge, Director, Public Safety
A. Groot, Director, Police Services
Insp. E. Rochette, Operations Officer, Nanaimo RCMP
N. Vracar, Deputy Corporate Officer
K. Gonzales, Acting Manager, Police Support Services
C. Wood, Manager, Social Planning
J. Vanderhoef, Zoom Moderator
A. Chanakos, Recording Secretary

1. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER:

The Public Safety Committee Meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

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

* Denotes electronic meeting participation as authorized by "Council Procedure Bylaw 2018 No. 7272"

3. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES:**

It was moved and seconded that the Minutes of the Public Safety Committee held in the Boardroom, Service and Resource Centre, 411 Dunsmuir Street, Nanaimo, BC, on Wednesday, 2024-OCT-09 at 4:00 p.m. be adopted. The motion carried unanimously.

4. **REPORTS:**

(a) Verbal Update re: Drop-In Hub Service

Christy Wood, Manager, Social Planning, provided a verbal update regarding the Drop-In Hub service. Highlights included:

- The City will be funding a year-round drop-in hub that will provide warming and cooling services, and will operate seven days a week, seven hours a day
- Key services that will be provided on site include:
 - Access to basic needs including food, hygiene supplies, clothing and laundry services
 - Broader connections to other supports and services including emergency shelter and housing services, healthcare and mental health resources
 - Seasonal services such as extended hours during extreme weather events
- Work is underway with BC Housing to potentially provide up to 20 temporary winter emergency shelter beds between January and March
- The drop-in hub will be located at 55 Old Victoria Road, with the entrance located off Nicol Street, and will be operated by Island Crisis Care Society and Nanaimo Family Life Association. Both agencies were vetted through an evaluation process led by United Way and City Staff
- The site is scheduled to open on 2025-JAN-02 and will operate from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily
- Daytime occupancy will be between 20 to 30 people, based on who is accessing services at the time and applicable storage needs for personal items
- The service model will include several staff and security services

Committee and Staff discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Security services for the site

- Concerns regarding a possible influx of drug trafficking outside the site once the drop-in hub opens
- The City-provided portion of the drop-in hub funding requires Community Safety Officers (CSOs) and RCMP members to be welcome on site at any time
- The RCMP's Special Investigation and Targeted Enforcement (SITE) team and downtown enforcement team will be made aware of the location and will include the site as part of their regular patrols to ensure there is no escalation of crime
- CSOs will ensure sidewalks are not blocked by individuals gathering outside the building to access nearby services

(b) Nanaimo Restorative Justice Program Overview

Introduced by Art Groot, Director, Police Services, and Kathy Gonzales, Acting Manager, Police Support Services.

Presentation:

1. Kluane Buser-Rivet, Program Manager, and Lex Vaugeois, Administrative Program Manager, Nanaimo Restorative Justice Program, provided a PowerPoint presentation. Highlights included:
 - On 2024-OCT-21, Council adopted a motion regarding potential increase of the annual funding for the Restorative Justice (RJ) Program from \$50,000 to \$150,000
 - The RJ Program creates opportunities for offenders to repair harm done through resolution agreements, as well as addressing root causes for behaviors and supporting offenders to access supports to address underlying issues
 - The RJ Program allows victims to share the impacts of crimes on themselves, and help develop the outcome for the offender
 - RJ principals come out of Indigenous communities and traditional forms of justice
 - The Program is offered to both youth and adult offenders, and there has been a rise in complexity of crimes participating in the Program
 - Referrals are received from many difference sources such as the RCMP, Provincial and Federal Crown, School District No. 68 and youth probation
 - RJ reduces strain on the justice system and allows RCMP members to focus on more serious cases

- The previous decrease in funding led to reduced staff, a break in programming, waitlists for services, and staff had to turn away complex files and referrals from the RCMP
- RJ focusses on keeping offenders in the community where they have caused harm, as research has shown that people who feel connected to their community are less likely to cause harm within it

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Community service partners include Growing Opportunities Farm Community Cooperative, Loaves and Fishes Community Food Bank, the BC Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), and the offender's school or First Nation
- RCMP referrals are assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine if the offender is a good fit for the RJ Program
- Community referrals are often received through a phone call or email, followed by an intake conversation
- Victim Fund surcharges collected by the Province often do not make it back to the community
- The City's program funding is saving provincial government money and the possibility to accomplish more with matching funds

It was moved and seconded that the Public Safety Committee recommend that Council continue to advocate to the Provincial Government for funding for the Nanaimo Restorative Justice Program. The motion carried unanimously.

(c) City of Nanaimo Liquor Control Strategy

Dave LaBerge, Director, Public Safety, provided an overview of the City's Liquor Control Strategy (the Strategy), including the following highlights:

- In 2002, the City contracted preparation of the Strategy in response to provincial licencing policy changes
- One of the main policy changes reduced the number of licencing classes to two: liquor primary and food primary
- The Strategy outlined the introduction of private liquor stores, in addition to government-operated liquor stores
- At the time, liquor primary establishments, including cabarets and dance clubs, were perceived to be contributing to a decreased safety

downtown, due to presence of organized crime and uncivil behaviour, requiring increased use of RCMP resources

- In response to the recommendations in the Strategy, the City developed a number of requirements including:
 - Requirement for clubs downtown to sign good neighbour agreements to address noise emissions, drink prices, patron queues and cleanliness outside the establishments
 - Cabarets and high-occupancy establishments were charged a higher business licencing fee; however, that has since been eliminated due to increased cooperation from these establishments, including installing patron scanning software to track who is in the establishments
 - Enactment of the Public Nuisance Bylaw 2019, No. 7267, which provided additional tools to the RCMP to deal with uncivil behavior
 - The installation of the first permanent washroom at Diana Krall Plaza, which led to a reduction of public urination on the streets
 - Regulation of mobile food trucks to help reduce the number of people congregating outside of clubs
 - Creation of the police-led Bar Watch Program in 2007, which was a collective commitment by the hospitality industry to take a zero-tolerance approach to violence, and its expansion in 2011 to include clubs/restaurants and pubs throughout the city
 - Dedicated police teams to patrol club districts during peak days/times, which enabled regular police patrols to focus on other areas of the city
- The provincial A Local Government Guide to Creating Municipal Alcohol Policy outlines ways to create conditions for alcohol sales, requirements for providing safe transportation from major events and general enforcement policies

Committee and Staff discussion took place regarding the following:

- Possibility of allowing public alcohol consumption in certain parks and during festival events (i.e. Night Market), whether the matter is within the scope of the Public Safety Committee given the zoning requirements and implications for park operations, and the desire for information from other municipalities
- Enforcement measures related to serving alcohol to minors

- Consideration to review the Strategy in conjunction with a nightlife and cultural space approach
- Understanding there are currently no public safety concerns related to the Strategy, the Strategy requirements are still current, and the desire for staff to bring back the matter if there are significant impacts in the future

5. OTHER BUSINESS:

The Committee inquired regarding an update on the recent incident involving a physical altercation at a washroom in the Maffeo Sutton Park. The incident is currently being review by Staff and is being handled by WorkSafeBC.

Committee discussion took place regarding the timeframe for the Committee to review the vacant buildings report which was presented at the 2024-OCT-07 Regular Council Meeting. The Chair advised the Committee that the report has not been referred to the Committee by Council and potential changes outlined in the report are costly.

Committee discussion took place regarding the potential for the Newcastle Community Association to be invited to provide a presentation at a future Public Safety Committee Meeting.

It was moved and seconded that the Public Safety Committee recommend that Council invite representatives of the Newcastle Community Association to attend the next Public Safety Committee Meeting to share their concerns regarding the impact of homelessness on residents and local businesses. The motion carried unanimously.

Committee discussion took place regarding the number of warming centres available for this winter season.

6. QUESTION PERIOD:

The Committee received one question from the public regarding agenda items.

7. ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved and seconded at 5:28 p.m. that the meeting adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

CHAIR

DEPUTY CORPORATE OFFICER