



MINUTES

GOVERNANCE AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, May 12, 2025, 1:00 P.M.
Shaw Auditorium, Vancouver Island Conference Centre
80 Commercial Street, Nanaimo, BC

- Members: Councillor B. Geselbracht, Chair
Mayor L. Krog
Councillor S. Armstrong (vacated at 3:14 p.m.)
Councillor H. Eastmure
Councillor E. Hemmens
Councillor P. Manly
Councillor J. Perrino
- Absent: Councillor T. Brown
Councillor I. Thorpe
- Staff: D. Lindsay, Chief Administrative Officer
L. Mercer, General Manager, Corporate Services
S. Gurrie, Director, Legislative Services
K. Ing, Director, IT/CIO
D. LaBerge, Director, Public Safety
C. Wood, Manager, Social Planning
R. Sawrie, Social Planner
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 1:00 p.m.

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS:

- (a) Agenda Item 6(a)(1) Basic Needs Services Overview – Presentation 3 – Add PowerPoint presentation titled “BC Housing Update: Nanaimo Homelessness and Housing”.
- (b) Agenda Item 6(a)(1) Basic Needs Services Overview – Presentation 3 – Update Jennifer Fox’s title to Regional Director, Vancouver Island Region.
- (c) Agenda Item 6(a)(1) Basic Needs Services Overview – Presentation 4 – Add the following presenters:
 - 1. Amanda Lemon, Director, Addiction Medicine and Substance Use, Island Health
 - 2. Brodie Tapp, Manager, Addiction Medicine and Substance Use, Island Health

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

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

4. 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, 2025-APR-14, at 1:00 p.m. be adopted as circulated. The motion carried unanimously.

5. AGENDA PLANNING:

(a) Upcoming Topics and Initiatives

Sheila Gurrie, Director, Legislative Services, spoke regarding topics and initiatives scheduled for upcoming Governance and Priorities Committee (GPC) meetings, and advised that the report regarding Controlling Sale of Invasive Species has been scheduled for the 2025-JUN-23 GPC meeting.

It was moved and seconded that Staff provide an update report in the fourth quarter, 2025 on the implementation of the Allan Neilson Building Permit Function Review recommendations (2021-MAR-22), including an evaluation of the success of the implemented recommendations, the timelines achieved for permit issuance across permit types, and identification of any recommendations not yet successfully implemented, along with the steps required to pursue them. The motion carried unanimously.

6. REPORTS:

(a) Healthy Nanaimo:

(1) Basic Needs Services Overview

Dave LaBerge, Director, Public Safety, provided an overview of the report in the agenda package.

Presentations:

1. Christy Wood, Manager, Social Planning, provided an overview of the City's role regarding basic needs services, and noted the following:
 - A comprehensive list of service providers was not provided in the Staff report as the focus was on those that are low barrier, operating at a fixed location, and those dedicated to helping people experiencing homelessness
 - Over the last 10 years, Nanaimo has lost some key basic needs services such as a drop-in centre, two indoor meal programs, additional shower programs and the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) "Out Shop"
 - Basic needs are foundational to stability and wellness, and are often a first point of contact for long-term services
 - Six organizations currently provide emergency meal services in the City, with the majority of meals being provided outdoors through outreach
 - Hygiene services are limited, with the City funding the only shower service located at Caledonia Park
 - The Leisure Economic Access Pass (LEAP) program has been expanded to allow some organizations to adjudicate individuals to obtain a LEAP pass, which provides access to recreation facility showers; however, options remain limited to those who are substance affected and cannot manage in a public facility
 - The City partners with a variety of service providers to provide daytime warming shelters in winter months, including The Hub, which offers access to food, hygiene supplies and clothing
 - Nanaimo has 63 year-round emergency shelter beds for adults, and eight beds designated for youth
 - Currently, Nanaimo has 329 supportive housing units, and an additional 342 are proposed by BC Housing
 - The Public Safety, IT and GIS departments are developing a new data tool to help the City identify service gaps and help with strategic placement of

essential services. The tool will be for internal use initially; however, there is capability to expand its use in the future

Committee discussion took place regarding outreach services, updates to the LEAP program and the City's role in providing land for housing.

2. Marina White, Health Director, Snuneymuxw First Nation, provided an overview of Snuneymuxw First Nation's role regarding basic needs services, and noted the following:

- Snuneymuxw First Nation (SFN) receives United Way funding to serve the Indigenous population in Nanaimo; however, recent data noted in the third quarter, SFN outreach workers served 379 Indigenous people and 654 non-Indigenous people
- Once a week, a hot meal is served to the unhoused population in Nanaimo. In addition, wellness packages containing hygiene supplies and snacks are handed out throughout the week
- Community Safety Officers (CSOs) have been helpful in assisting the unhoused population move their belongings, and aid outreach workers by delivering messages to the unhoused community
- Additional addictions and mental health services are necessary to help with homelessness
- The twelve transitional units SFN has with wraparound services have been very successful
- Basic needs services can be improved through collaboration between service providers and ensuring supply of affordable housing
- SFN homeless outreach often receive pushback in certain areas of the City when the workers try to park their outreach vehicle to provide services and deliver supplies
- The Point-in-Time (PiT) Count numbers are low as some unhoused individuals do not want to be identified, and the Indigenous unhoused population traditionally does not attend the PiT Count
- SFN recently hired a peer-lived outreach worker, which has had a positive impact on the homeless population

Committee discussion took place regarding connecting with neighbourhoods to help provide consistent outreach services, and the need for more detox beds.

3. Allison Dunnet, Executive Director and Strategic Advisor, Homelessness, Jennifer Fox, Regional Director, Vancouver Island Region, and Jerry Michael, Coordinated Access and Assessment Manager, BC Housing, provided an overview of BC Housing's role regarding basic needs services, and noted the following:

- Over the last year, BC Housing has been prioritizing the HEART and HEARTH programs
- BC Housing's Strategic Working Group has expressed a desire to focus on downtown Nanaimo and Bowen Park in regards to homeless encampment response
- Tenancing for HEARTH assets is done through the Coordinated Access and Assessment Table
- BC Housing hopes to provide community partners with access to the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) to streamline work around homelessness
- CSOs and BC Housing homelessness outreach workers distributed winter survival kits during the winter months through the HEART program
- BC Housing currently supports 95 permanent shelter spaces in Nanaimo, and 919 unique people accessed these shelters in the 2024 – 2025 fiscal year

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- BC Housing is working to coordinate opening the next HEARTH site with the closure of The Hub
- The ability to provide shelter services rests heavily on partnerships with local governments and local nonprofits
- BC Housing recently completed a Request for Proposal process that has created a list of qualified nonprofits that can operate future supportive housing operations
- The supportive housing and HEARTH programs focus on a housing first/harm reduction approach to housing; however, the supportive housing units at the Sparrow building will be designed to reduce exposure to drugs and alcohol
- A major barrier in leaving supportive housing is difficulty affording the next option, as supportive housing offers food, shelter and community

4. Amanda Lemon, Director, Addiction Medicine and Substance Use, Island Health, and Lisa Murphy, Director of Mental Health and Substance Use Clinical Operations, provided an overview of Island Health's role regarding basic needs services, and noted the following:

- When individuals complete a treatment program and return to supportive housing, it poses a risk of relapse
- Spaces like The Hub provide easy access for service providers to touch base with unhoused clients
- Over the last four years, Island Health has been working on ways to provide more stability and proactive planning for mental health and substance use services
- The provincial initiative, Road to Recovery, aims to provide equitable access to services and an increase in bed-based services
- Spreading services throughout the City, rather than concentrating them downtown, would increase access for individuals
- Utilizing a trauma-informed approach to care is important to build trust

Committee discussion took place regarding access to mental health services for youth, the role of outreach workers when assisting unhoused mothers, and the impact The Hub has had on the surrounding neighbourhood.

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

The Governance and Priorities Committee reconvened the meeting at 3:14 p.m.

Councillor Armstrong vacated the Shaw Auditorium at 3:14 p.m.

5. Eileen Gillett, Director of Public Services and Planning, Vancouver Island Regional Library, provided an overview of Vancouver Island Regional Library's role regarding basic needs services, and noted the following:

- The Vancouver Island Regional Library's (VIRL) mission, set out through provincial legislation, states that equitable services must be provided to everyone
- Nanaimo has three library branches that collectively receive about 1,200 visits per day
- VIRL is working to improve literacy levels in the region, as 40% of adults struggle with literacy
- Library branches provide copies of the Surviving in Nanaimo guide, and keep a bulletin board with a list of basic needs services providers

- Many services are available for isolated seniors, youth, individuals living in cars, young families and new immigrants, as well as access to free public computers and Wi-Fi
- High risk branches have recently installed Brave Overdose Detection Sensors that alert staff if no motion is detected in an occupied washroom
- Rules of conduct are in place to keep patron behaviors under control

Committee discussion took place regarding training opportunities for library staff and the recent need for security measures.

6. John McCormick, Executive Director, Nanaimo Systems Planning Organization, spoke regarding:

- The most recent PiT count shows a 20% increase from last year
- Community needs can be addressed by additional rental supports, additional drop-in hubs, reactivating programs that distribute survival supplies, and additional emergency shelter, transitional and supportive housing units
- Around 200 additional shelter beds are needed to meet Nanaimo's needs
- Discussions at the Union of BC Municipalities conference and at the provincial level regarding converting unused buildings into housing
- Nanaimo does not have centralized services due to its linear geography

Committee discussion took place regarding options and risks for converting unused buildings into shelter space and work the Systems Planning Organization is currently undertaking.

7. QUESTION PERIOD:

The Committee received two questions from the public regarding agenda items.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved and seconded at 4:20 p.m. that the meeting adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

CHAIR

CORPORATE OFFICER