



MINUTES

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, June 11, 2025, 4:00 P.M.
Boardroom, Service and Resource Centre
411 Dunsmuir Street, Nanaimo, BC

Members: Councillor Armstrong, Chair
Councillor Eastmure
Kim Coulthard, At Large Member
Doug Cowling, At Large Member
Destiny Herman, At Large Member
Kevin Lambert, At Large Member
Collen Middleton, At Large Member
Jennifer Millbank, At Large Member (entered at 4:01 p.m.)
Ruth Taylor, At Large Member

Absent: James Bowen, At Large Member
Scott Brodie, At Large Member

Staff: Supt. E. Rochette, Nanaimo Detachment RCMP
T. Doyle, Fire Chief
D. LaBerge, Director, Public Safety
N. Vracar, Deputy Corporate Officer
J. Rose, Manager, Transportation
C. Wood, Manager, Social Planning
B. Hornby, Senior Community Safety Officer
A. Chanakos, Zoom Moderator
L. Young, Recording Secretary

1. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER:

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

Councillor Armstrong advised that, in accordance with "Council Procedure Bylaw 2018 No. 7272", question period will no longer take place at Public Safety Committee meetings and that any members of the public in attendance could direct their questions to Councillors Armstrong and Eastmure after the meeting.

J. Millbank entered the Boardroom at 4:01 p.m.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

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

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES:

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the Public Safety Committee Meeting held in the Boardroom, Service and Resource Centre, 411 Dunsmuir Street, Nanaimo, BC, on Wednesday, 2025-APR-09, at 4:00 p.m., be adopted. The motion carried unanimously.

4. REPORTS:

(a) Pedestrian Infrastructure Upgrade Priorities

Jamie Rose, Manager, Transportation, provided an overview of the report and an on-screen presentation included in the agenda package. Highlights included:

- In 2018, Council made the decision to create the Pedestrian Unallocated program, which allocated \$300,000 to invest in pedestrian improvement projects on an annual basis. During COVID-19, the budget was increased to \$1 million; however, the budget has since returned to \$300,000
- The Pedestrian Unallocated program has helped the City make huge strides to improve pedestrian mobility
- In 2022/2023, Staff implemented the Crosswalk Improvement Prioritization Tool which uses a Geographic Information System (GIS) to measure factors such as speed, safety, collision history, crossing distance, proximity to transit and schools, and socio-economic factors
- Review of the three recommended projects for 2025: Portsmouth Road at Applecross Road, Wallace Street at Franklyn Street, and Townsite Road at St. Patrick Street

Committee and Staff discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Adding lights or requesting changes to existing infrastructure may affect the cost of raised crosswalks
- Concerns regarding prioritizing the Wallace Street crosswalk over other projects that are closer to schools

- Concerns regarding speeding in the roundabout at Nelson Road and Rutherford Road. Staff noted that they are aware of these concerns and are looking at options
- Crosswalks with artistic designs could potentially be visually distracting to drivers; however, recent literature suggests that they may increase driver awareness and increase pedestrian activity
- The Crosswalk Improvement Prioritization Tool is used to guide Staff decisions for pedestrian improvement projects; however, other factors are considered such as upcoming capital projects or whether crosswalk signals are already installed
- Concerns regarding the lack of public input in the Pedestrian Unallocated program
- Many pedestrian improvement methods have been implemented at Departure Bay Road near Wingrove Street over the years such as installing traffic-calming curbs on the centre line and lowering speeds on a seasonal basis
- Recommendation that higher priority be given to a raised crosswalk at Second Street and Kamp Place
- Potential to revisit the prioritization process and include public input; however, a model founded on data keeps personal opinions and bias to a minimum
- A request that Staff forward the previous Staff report from a Governance and Priorities Committee Meeting regarding the prioritization model to the Committee for information

5. OTHER BUSINESS:

(a) Verbal Report re: Drop-in Hub - Overview of Mitigation Strategies and Impact on Neighbourhood

Christy Wood, Manager, Social Planning, provided a verbal report regarding the Drop-in Hub (the Hub) at 55 Victoria Road and provided an overview of the mitigation strategies as well as the impact on the neighbourhood. Highlights included:

- A more fulsome update regarding the Hub will be coming to Council this summer
- The Hub is currently operated by Island Crisis Care Society (ICCS) for basic needs and health-related services from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Nanaimo Family Life Association (NFLA) for the overnight shelter from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.

- The Hub is the only daily service in the City providing basic needs services to the unsheltered population
- During Q1 of 2025, the Hub served at least 207 unique individuals and on average is receiving almost 70 visits each day, with 33.5 percent of the Hub users being Indigenous
- As of May 21, 2025, 114 supportive housing registry applications have been completed at the Hub and more than 10 Hub users have been housed with many more on the waitlist
- In addition to the shelter and drop-in space, 55 Victoria Road houses other health services such as three addiction clinics, a harm reduction service, and an outreach pharmacy
- Residents and businesses in the area have reported high amounts of social disorder, open drug use, and disturbing and traumatic behaviours. Much of this activity is concentrated on Nicol Street, which has led to traffic safety concerns
- In response to concerns, Staff are meeting weekly with United Way, ICCS, and NFLA to develop strategies to support the unhoused population and reduce the impact on the neighbourhood. Such strategies may include:
 - Coordinating regular meetings with tenants;
 - A potential Community Advisory Committee;
 - Increasing daytime capacity to reduce the number of people lingering outside;
 - Setting clear expectations for behaviour of the users of the Hub;
 - Reporting all drug activity to the RCMP and increasing Community Safety Officer (CSO) presence;
 - Daily visits by the Clean Team and deep cleaning once per week; and,
 - Regular monitoring for other leasable locations that may be more appropriate for the Hub service.
- Requested feedback from the Committee regarding reducing impacts to the neighbourhood and ensuring vulnerable residents continue to receive support

Barry Hornby, Senior Community Safety Officer (CSO), provided an overview of the role of the CSOs at and near the Hub. Highlights included:

- CSOs are at the Hub two to three hours a day, including during the 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. turnover time

- CSOs assist by helping keep the sidewalk clear and calling emergency services regarding overdoses
- Individuals often leave the Hub and go onto the sidewalk at Nicol Street to use drugs instead of the Overdose Prevention Site
- A note of a recent incident with an individual under the influence that was wandering in and out of traffic on Nicol Street. CSOs averted the dangerous situation by taking the individual to a sobering bed
- Encouraging individuals to move out of the Hub area displaces them to other locations such as the cul-de-sac on Finlayson Street or the vacant lot below the old Firehouse

Committee and Staff discussion took place regarding CSOs' roles as peace officers. CSOs take a compassion-based approach to build relationships with individuals.

Tim Doyle, Fire Chief, advised that when the Fire Department responds to a 911 call, they attend to extinguish the fire, then report to other agencies as required. If there is suspected criminality, the RCMP are notified.

Superintendent Eric Rochette, Nanaimo RCMP, advised that the RCMP regularly patrols with the CSOs and outlined the procedures when arson is reported.

Committee and Staff discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Acknowledged the work of CSOs, the Fire Department, and RCMP at or near the Hub
- A request that the City declare 55 Victoria Road a nuisance property; however, the nuisance behaviour generally occurs adjacent to the property, and there is no indication that the property owner is facilitating illegal activity
- Potential for perceived conflicts when property owners profit from leasing their property to serve the unhoused population and pharmacies are dispensing safe supply to those struggling with addictions
- The importance of balancing enforcement and community wellbeing
- The concentration of services also creates a concentration of social disorder and nuisance behavior; however, there are currently no other options for leasable space
- Originally, the intention was to open two hubs; however, only one hub was opened due to limited funds

- The service provider was chosen based on their experience and ability to provide the service
- The need for more complex care and mental health support for unhoused individuals
- Concerns regarding traffic safety on Nicol Street
- Suggestion to create space in the parking lot adjacent to the Hub for unhoused individuals to gather instead of the sidewalk, and providing support workers with alternative options for parking
- Individuals with concerns regarding RCMP response are encouraged to call the non-emergency line during business hours
- Staff have been engaging with neighbourhood associations, businesses and residents in the area to hear their concerns
- Individuals exhibiting inappropriate behaviour that cause safety issues receive a break in service from the Hub, though service providers work hard to avoid breaks in service. If criminality is involved, the RCMP would be involved
- Unhoused individuals may gather at the Hub between 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. to confirm their bed at the overnight shelter; however, congregation after 8:00 p.m. outside of the Hub is not permitted
- A desire to review the Good Neighbourhood Agreements to ensure that the service providers are held accountable

(b) Verbal Report re: Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy - Building Safer Communities Fund

C. Wood, Manager, Social Planning, provided a verbal report regarding the Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy - Building Safer Communities Fund. Highlights included:

- The City was allocated \$1.8 million from Public Safety Canada through the Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF) to develop and implement a gun and gang violence prevention strategy
- In May 2023, Council endorsed the Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy (NYRS), which outlines six key focus areas: safe youth gathering spaces, youth outreach, Snawaylth teachings, youth mentoring, enhancing existing programs, and media and communications
- Agencies funded by the BSCF include Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Club Central Vancouver Island, Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society, City of Nanaimo Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, Nanaimo Foodshare, Nanaimo Hornets,

School District 68, and Snuneymuxw First Nation. Each initiative coordinated by the agencies directly supports youth safety, inclusion and resilience

- A steering committee was established to oversee strategy development and funding allocation
- Since programming started in October 2023, over 2,000 unique youth have participated in these funded initiatives, and the agencies are reporting positive changes in the participating youth
- Staff are working with community partners to find ways to sustain these beneficial programs, such as redirecting existing budgets, seeking additional grants, and collaboration and resource sharing between agencies
- Requested additional suggestions from the Committee and the broader community

Committee and Staff discussion took place regarding the recent road development at Boxwood Road and Northfield Road, and interest was expressed in having “Narrowing of Streets and the Impact on Emergency Vehicles” as a future Public Safety Committee meeting topic.

6. ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved and seconded at 5:44 p.m. that the meeting adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

CHAIR

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

CORPORATE OFFICER