

AGENDA ITEM NO: 7.1.

MEETING DATE: November 9, 2022

STAFF REPORT – COVER SHEET

SUBJECT: Wellness Centre and Shelter Update DATE: November 4, 2022

DEPARTMENT: Public Safety & Social Development PREPARED BY: Karen Stanton

1. SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

To address the increased need for emergency shelter space for people experiencing homelessness in our community, and the impending cold weather, Council is requested to consider resolutions to facilitate the establishment of a winter shelter, extreme weather response shelter beds, and a one stop shop wellness centre in keeping with the Homelessness Action Plan and Community Safety Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Whereas an overnight shelter, extreme weather response beds, and a daytime wellness centre are urgently needed to accommodate and support, over the winter, many people who are living precariously on the downtown streets and through the City in makeshift camps with significant negative impact to themselves and the surrounding community, and existing shelters are operating at full capacity,

And whereas, subject to BC Housing providing operating funding for staffing and security, and entering into an Agreement with the City of Chilliwack indemnifying the City for any liability associated with shelter use at 46146 Margaret Avenue and 45835 Spadina Avenue, subject to the Fire Chief inspecting the building and concluding that there are no immediate life safety concerns;

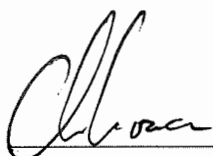
And, subject to lease agreement between the property owner at 45951 Tretheway Avenue and the wellness centre operator, Pacific Community Resources Society,

Be it resolved that Council make a policy decision for six months not to enforce the Zoning Bylaw or BC Building Code for these specific uses.


FOR Karen Stanton
Director, Public Safety & Social Development

3. CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION/COMMENTS:

Supports recommendation.


Chris Crosman, CAO

**STAFF REPORT ON
WELLNESS CENTRE AND SHELTER UPDATE**

PREPARED BY: Karen Stanton DATE: November 4, 2022
POSITION: Director DEPARTMENT: Public Safety & Social Development

1. DEFINITION OF ISSUE:

To address the increased need for emergency shelter space for people experiencing homelessness in our community, and the impending cold weather, Council is requested to consider resolutions to facilitate the establishment of a winter shelter, extreme weather response shelter beds, and a one stop shop wellness centre in keeping with the Homelessness Action Plan and Community Safety Plan.

2. FACTORS:

- 2.1 Over the last few months, Chilliwack, like other communities in the Fraser Valley, has seen an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness. This is due to a variety of factors, including the ongoing housing affordability crisis, rising costs of living, and gaps in health services for people experiencing mental and substance use challenges. In October, local emergency shelters were operating up to 26 beds over capacity, and with the colder weather pending Ruth & Naomi's have put forward proposals for the operation of a winter shelter and extreme weather response shelter

They are proposing to convert an existing modular unit on the property at 46146 Margaret Avenue (adjacent to their existing shelter) to provide overnight beds for people experiencing homelessness over the winter months through to March 31, 2023. As the property is not zoned to permit shelter use, and the need is urgent, a policy resolution is proposed to not enforce the zoning bylaw.

To provide additional space during extreme weather, Ruth & Naomi's Mission has also come to an agreement with the Cheamview United Church and BC Housing to use the church hall for Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelter beds. EWR beds are typically open for nights when the forecast temperature dips below zero, or there is excessive snow or wet weather. An alert is sent out to service providers when the EWR opens, and when it is closed. As the zoning of the church property no longer allows assembly use, a policy resolution of Council is requested to permit the EWR onsite.

The EWR shelter would only be in use during the night for sleeping with expected hours being 9pm to 7 am. They will have up to 25 beds to start, but are hopeful that the opening up of additional winter shelter beds at their Margaret Avenue location will decrease the number of beds needed at the church. Griffin Security will be on-site at all times the EWR is in use. This will help to address any security issues during the night and ensure occupants leave the facility in the morning and go to the Mission for breakfast.

- 2.2 Through the Community Safety Plan and ongoing work of the Community Response Team and Outreach, it has been determined that the establishment of a culturally safe, trauma informed

wellness centre with wrap around supports would go a long way towards effectively supporting improved health, safety, and well-being of individuals experiencing homelessness.

In support of this project, the City has accessed funding through UBCM (\$400,000); Reaching Home (\$133,000); Fraser Health Authority (\$300,000) and BC Housing (\$267,720) to support one year of operation. It is hoped that if this project is successful, longer term funding will be found by senior levels of government to support it. This Fall, Pacific Community Resources Society was selected through a Request for Proposal process to operate the centre subject to the identification of a site. An exhaustive site search for a commercially zoned site and building with 4,500 sq. ft +/- indoor space has ultimately proven unsuccessful.

Given the need for this service, and to avoid losing time-limited funding, Council is being asked to consider a policy resolution to not enforce the zoning bylaw with respect to 45951 Tretheway Avenue to support the establishment of a wellness centre at this location.

3. RECOMMENDATION & SUBSTANTIATION:

Recommendation:

Whereas an overnight shelter, extreme weather response beds, and a daytime wellness centre are urgently needed to accommodate and support, over the winter, many people who are living precariously on the downtown streets and through the City in makeshift camps with significant negative impact to themselves and the surrounding community, and existing shelters are operating at full capacity,

And whereas, subject to BC Housing providing operating funding for staffing and security, and entering into an Agreement with the City of Chilliwack indemnifying the City for any liability associated with shelter use at 46146 Margaret Avenue and 45835 Spadina Avenue, subject to the Fire Chief inspecting the building and concluding that there are no immediate life safety concerns;

And, subject to lease agreement between the property owner at 45951 Tretheway Avenue and the wellness centre operator, Pacific Community Resources Society,

Be it resolved that Council make a policy decision for six months not to enforce the Zoning Bylaw or BC Building Code for these specific uses.

Substantiation:

There is an urgent need for emergency shelter and wrap around supports for people experiencing homelessness in our community. These short-term initiatives will help people to get off of the street and support them on their health and wellness journey. The projects are supported by the City's Community Safety Plan and Homelessness Action Plan and are being supported by funding from BC Housing, Fraser Health, UBCM and Reaching Home. Plans for each site include security measures for those accessing services and the surrounding community.



November 4, 2022

Wellness Centre Location Search

To whom it may concern,

This memo is written on behalf of Pacific Community Resources Society regarding the efforts to date to establish a site to run a Wellness Centre for those facing homelessness and street entrenchment in Chilliwack. While the memo is written in point form for brevity, please know we are happy to elaborate as needed.

Establishing a Site:

- We have searched throughout Chilliwack for several months for a suitable location to run a Wellness Centre that is appropriate for access to the homeless population arriving on foot or bike, safe location for service to neighbours, participants and staff, as well as zoned for appropriate use.
- Should a site look to meet the criteria needs, we have involved realtors to help negotiate offers to lease with the owner. This has involved multiple viewings of several properties.
- We have written offers to lease, with not one owner being willing to lease for this service.

Actions to Mitigate Concerns:

- In the staffing model for the Wellness Centre we created a full time position as a Community Liaison whose job is to respond to any concerns of neighbours of the Centre, regularly check in with neighbours, and to patrol the property assuring cleanliness and that participants are not dwelling in neighbouring areas.
 - Put extra dollars in the budget to hire security as needed for the site.
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- Made agreements with 4 of our current PCRS outreach programs that have established relationship with the homeless to also be on site on a rotation at the Centre to use their established rapport with participants to assure cooperation with site rules and safety.

Sincerely,
Steven Esau, Director of Operations – Fraser East