

Mayor's Task Force: Homelessness and Community Safety and Wellbeing

Date: Jan 15, 2025 Time: 9am-11am

Location: Council Chambers

Attendees:

Wayne Price, Mark Fercho, Paul Heywood, Jamie Jenkins, Nancy Reid, Sean Airth, Julie Free, Melody Munro, Stacey Brensrud. Pastor Ron Short, Polly Sutherland.

Regrets:

Michele Bates, MLA Davis, Linda Miller, Ryck Schielke; Wesley Graham, Avery Hulbert

MAYOR'S COMMENTS

Opened meeting and welcomed participants.

Discussed Infinity Optics as a solution and preventative measure for theft and mischief in the community. City exploring high quality cameras with capacity to support RCMP in crime prevention and reduction.

Cameras may also be a possibility for Common Ground. In the meantime, trail-cams, lights, and signage will be tried to reduce theft and crime. Items are purchased and arrangements are being made to have things placed over the next two weeks.

DISCUSSION

Withdrawal Management in Cranbrook

Discussed issues regarding access to safe withdrawal management within Cranbrook. Options for withdrawal management include hospitals, at home, and bed based, but not many beds available for Cranbrook folks at this time.

The Cranbrook hospital currently faces limited access to withdrawal care, with limited staff and bed space. Bed based options in Cranbrook are also limited due to staffing difficulties. Stigma surrounding access to withdrawal management creates additional difficulties in assuring individuals receive the care they need. Further issues in withdrawal management in Cranbrook stems from the disjointed model, which could be improved by implementing a community-based facility acting as a hub for withdrawal management services. Other solutions include RAM clinics and Road to Recovery.

With Road to Recovery acting as a government organization, it would be greatly beneficial to have a community-based facility working with this community, combining both a top-down and bottom-up approach.

Youth Access

Throughout the conversation around withdrawal management, the limited availability of youth services was frequently discussed. Currently, youth accessing withdrawal management services in Cranbrook are either referred to facilities outside of the community or to the Cranbrook hospital.

Separating at risk youth from the family and community may contribute to their struggles.

Additionally, Cranbrook lacks youth services, such as a community center, which could act as both a preventative measure and resource for at risk youth. Creating more youth spaces or programs within the community would be greatly beneficial.

OLD BUSINESS

Common Ground Fundraiser Update

Follow up on Mayor's update regarding discussion with Kootenay Roasting Company around creating a signature "Common "Grounds" coffee blend for a possible fund raiser. Will review later when the business plan is in place. Identification of where funds could go would need to happen first. Could tie into youth supports?

Tabled for now.

Board Governance Training Update-Stacey Brensrud

Planning to involve the city staff and the College of the Rockies. Timeline: April 15th, 2025.

Grant Updates

The ETF grant application was not awarded. Application will be reviewed, tightened, and resubmitted in the next intake planned for March 2025. Jaime, Sean, Polly, and Marcel will meet to review application.

FRESH START, ANKORS, Kootenay Employment services submitted grant applications to Vancouver Foundation Grants to maintain and develop day-pay and wage-a-week programs. 1st round decision will be made end of March.

Plan to explore continued funding options from BC Housing and SparcBC to support Common Ground into 2026.

A meeting will be set up between BC Housing and service providers to explore future funding for operation of Common Ground. Successes and challenges and many lessons learned. It would be a loss if we were unable to continue the initiative due to funding constraints.

Collaboration between outreach and MSDPR to provide buddy heaters and safe propane tanks has successfully reduced accidental tent fires. However, incidents of theft of these heaters and the wood fuel remain an issue.

Committee discussed temporary solutions such as trail cams and signage and revisited Infinity Optics as a potential permanent solution.

Task Force also discussing advocacy to UBCM for a transfer of money to municipality to address the ongoing social needs. Service providers always needing to find and apply for ongoing funds takes a significant portion of service providers energy resources.

UPDATES

Website Construction (Community Engagement and Communication Strategy)

The Drug Awareness Recovery Team (DART) website will be used as a model for the Task Force website. The website will favour a simple design, featuring a landing page, resources, and a donation link.

Task Force will continue working with DART to create a business plan. Paul will reach out to DART regarding presenting to the Task Force

Decisions regarding the branding of the website remain in progress. Paul will create a TF logo for the website.

Afterhours/Weekend services

Pastor Ron, Polly, and James K toured The Dwelling Place as a possible site for afterhours and weekend services for those in need.

Challenges the church will face in offering these services includes funding, staffing, and insurance. The Task Force will work to address these barriers.

Meetings about possible sites should include Chris Churchhill from Fire Services. Having fire prevention input at the very start will help provide best practice in identifying the best site for any type of afterhours or overnight services.

Day Wage program

An application for funding a day pay program has been submitted, however, a self-sustaining model would be ideal. Ideas for work included cleaning up abandoned camps and removing abandoned shopping carts. This type of initiative creates employment opportunities for struggling individuals, as well as improves public spaces

Implementation of the second idea needs attention to ensure abandoning carts does not increase to produce more work.

Incomplete from Agenda:

- Breakout sessions
- Group discussions

ACTION ITEMS

Name	Action	Time-Line
Paul	Will reach out to DART regarding presentation to Task Force	Request for Feb or Mar meeting.
Paul	Will create TF logo for website.	Will bring Feb mtg for approval.
Marcel	Will reach out to Hire Good regarding presentation to Task Force	Request for Feb or Mar meeting.
Marcel	Set up mtg with Jamie, Sean, Polly for grant application review	Feb 15, 2025

10:55am- Meeting adjourned