

June 19, 2023, 6 – 7 pm
 Song Sparrow Hall
 MEETING MINUTES

In Attendance: **39 members**

Panel:

1. RCMP Members: Staff Sgt. **Scott West** & Sgt. **Simon Scott**
2. City Staff: **Erin Jackson**, CAO City of Salmon Arm (COSA)
3. CMHA Representatives: **Dawn Dunlop**, Executive Dir. CMHA & **Glenda Cooper**, Manager of Supportive Housing and Homeless Outreach CMHA

SHARED CONCERNS

Not a question, yet shared concern:

"With the homeless camp moving to where it is now, I thought this was supposed to come with increased security, by-law, and police presence. I see none of this downtown. While there are many social issues at play here and we have provincial and federal governments that seem to have no interest in protecting law-abiding citizens and businesses, we cannot sacrifice our downtown. The downtown of Salmon Arm is a tourist hub, we have just spent many millions of dollars on a transportation upgrade downtown, and downtown businesses are the heartbeat of this community. We risk losing this if we allow lawlessness to grow."

DOWNTOWN PATROLLING:

1. Are there currently regular police and/or bylaw patrolling downtown and around the Ross Street Plaza and washrooms during the day or evening?

RCMP: There are 20 members in SA. There are downtown patrols, day and night - when they can, but no designated patrols. All members have been asked to drive through SA as frequently as possible. SA RCMP has a large area to cover, but they do their best to ensure coverage of the downtown core.

COSA: Bylaw does patrol and responds to complaints. Patrols downtown are not scheduled; however, they do patrol regularly. The City of Salmon Arm has hired another bylaw officer, they will start July 10, 2023.

2. Would increased RCMP presence downtown in the evenings decrease vandalism activity?

RCMP: It probably would help deter some activity. Businesses, and property owners taking additional measures to protect property would be welcome by RCMP. Some ideas are... lighting, fences, elimination of dark corners see Q. 5

3. Is information being collected from the complaints/concerns that are called into the non-emergency line for RCMP?

RCMP: Yes, for a limited amount of time. It does help them prioritize areas for patrolling.

THEFT and VANDALISM

4. Has there been a measurable increase in criminal activity/vandalism since the Salvation Army shelter closed?

RCMP:

- Difficult to put numbers to this. Though, from 2018 - 2022 no large spikes in criminal activity
- Information on minor files is only kept for a maximum of 2 years under the Privacy Act.
- No crime number or coding for Downtown specifically.

COSA: The city of SA has not seen a specific rise in or an association with the closure of the Salvation Army Shelter. The city of SA in collaboration with BC Housing and CMHA is in the process of working through a re-zoning to facilitate a

new homeless shelter. The public hearing for that proposal will be on **July 24th**. More details will be announced in the coming weeks.

5. Does the RCMP have suggestions on increasing security in our business area? Do they or the City of Salmon Arm encourage additional lighting, security cameras, gates, or other loitering deterrents?

RCMP: Yes. RCMP suggests lighting, gates and fences, the elimination of dark corners, and security cameras can all be of assistance in deterring illegal activity on your property.

6. We have security cameras installed on our premises, so we are aware when there are people near the building during the night-time or on weekends. If these cameras notify us of criminal or suspicious behaviour, who do we notify and who responds?

RCMP: If you see criminal activity in progress, call the police. Full Stop. You can call the none emergency line if you are unsure.

7. There have been many fires set outside downtown businesses and reports of broken windows, vandalism, and theft. What is the City's obligation or responsibility to businesses as compensation for us as taxpayers to protect ourselves and our businesses?

COSA: The City of Salmon Arm is not able to compensate business owners or building owners for damage caused by vandalism or theft. The city is able to provide funding for Bylaw and RCMP services.

PUBLIC DRUG USE

8. Does Salmon Arm have a safe injection site?

CMHA:

- Salmon Arm does not have a public safe-use site.

* CMHA does provide Overdose Prevention Services within our programs which include: education, prevention, naloxone, and other services as needed.

• CMHA stresses that these are very complex issues and will have complex solutions. CMHA is able to offer assistance and work with businesses on how to best respond to drug use, sleeping, loitering, etc. They are now tracking those calls for assistance to further gather data on our local situation.

* Please refer to the *Who to Call, When to Call* sheet for more information.

****The following reflects updates since the June 19 meeting** ~ vending machine that may contain items such as condoms, water, naloxone kits, testing strips, and other such harm-reduction supplies is being discussed. CMHA is not moving forward at this time, as further conversations will be held.

9. Public alcohol intoxication is illegal. Is public drug intoxication legal?

RCMP:

-Public use of marijuana is legal.

-Public use of hard drugs such as Meth, Cocaine, etc. is decriminalized.

-Public use of alcohol is still illegal.

We can take someone into custody if they are a danger to themselves but they are released when they are sober if drugs are the issue. Noise disruptions, disorderly conduct, etc. offenses, and the RCMP can attend to those matters. If open drug use is observed or someone is found to have drugs on their person, education and support are offered. Marijuana and Alcohol use in public is prohibited and you can call the RCMP, call the police if you see people outside consuming.

10. If it is illegal to consume alcohol or marijuana on city property or on private business property/parking lots, who do I call for support when it is occurring?

RCMP: See Q. 9

11. Who do I call to clean up human feces and items left over from drug activity etc. on public/city property and business property? Is this truly up to the business owner (when the provincial government has made this possible)?

COSA: If it is on public or city property you can call the City of Salmon Arm. The parks team will attend to this.

12. Who do I call when there is leftover drug paraphernalia around my business? We have heard how toxic these drugs can be, how can they be removed safely?

COSA: If it is on public or city property you can call the City of Salmon Arm, or report online. Parks or Bylaw will respond. If it is on private property, yes, it is up to the landowner or business owner to deal with.

CMHA: Can assist you in best practices for clean up of drug paraphernalia etc. They recommend consultation as well with Interior Health and see if we can set up some further training and/or services, best practices, and public health follow-up meeting.

13. How do I prevent my business from being a drug-use and washroom site?

RCMP: Lighting, fencing, removing corners and hidden areas from your property. Monitoring with cameras and reporting suspicious behaviour.

CMHA: You can also call and receive support from CMHA in asking folks to move along and potentially connecting them with available supportive services. Remember that it may take some time and patience, and folks may not leave immediately. Remember to keep everyone's safety in mind at all times, including your own.

LOITERING AND OVERNIGHT USE OF PARKS

14. Overnight camping is not allowed in parks. Why is (was) it allowed at the Ross Street Plaza stage? What is the law and what is allowed in this location?

RCMP: Overnight camping is not permitted at the Ross Street Plaza

- There are a number of items that attract people to stay in this location; shelter, access to electricity, washrooms, and its central location will continue to make this area an attractant.
- Patrolling has been stepped up at this location.

15. The city set up a camping area for the unhoused by the waterfront/thrift store. When people are camping in other non-approved areas within Salmon Arm, does RCMP or Bylaw redirect them to this location that already has toilets provided?

RCMP: Yes, they do direct people to supportive housing or the designated camping site. This is not something that RCMP can force individuals to do and some do not choose to move there.

16. Loitering. What can be done if you have people sitting/gathering in front of your business and refusing to move along (causing customers to avoid your business and/or feel unsafe)?

RCMP: After 5 pm yes, it is emergency services or 911.

COSA: If it is a non-emergency you can report on the City of Salmon Arm's website and Bylaw can respond in the morning if it occurs after hours. See Q.18

17. We have been advised to call 911 to handle all the homeless problems after 5 pm. The local police have enough problems dealing with serious crimes. Is there a better place to report problems after hours?

RCMP: After 5 pm yes, it is emergency services or 911.

COSA: If it is a nonemergency but an urgent matter you can report on the City of Salmon Arm's website and Bylaw can respond in the morning.

18. What can be done about chronic loitering and nuisance individuals? Can we call RCMP or Bylaw if they are disrupting public spaces, i.e., treble clef patio and Shuswap Park mall property?

RCMP: Loitering itself is not a criminal activity. Patience is needed when moving folks. As a property or business owner, you do have the right to ask people to move off your property

CMHA: Stresses being aware of everyone's safety. If you are in a situation to ask people to leave your property or business, do so in pairs.

HOMELESSNESS and MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

19. Why are there not enough facilities for people experiencing homelessness after the closing of the Salvation Army? Is there a plan to address the number of people without a home and shelter? What is the City of Salmon Arm's (short-term or long-term) "plan" for homelessness, addictions, and vandalism in Salmon Arm? What is the City of Salmon Arm's responsibility towards housing the homeless; ultimately, who is responsible?

CMHA:

- As per the Provincial announcement, BC Housing, the City, and CMHA are working towards bringing a shelter to Salmon Arm in the coming months.
- CMHA is actively working on developing additional affordable and supportive housing that extends beyond an emergency shelter.
- We all have a responsibility and it takes collaboration and shared strategies between all parties, Bylaw, RCMP, City of SA, CMHA, Interior Health, and the community.

20. What can be done when someone with mental health concerns is disrupting a public space?

See Q. 21

21. It is hard to tell if someone with mental health concerns poses a risk to themselves or others. What is the best course of action if someone seems mentally unwell in a public space?

CMHA: If you are concerned about somebody's wellness, call emergency services. CMHA does not provide emergency care.

COSA: Yes, call emergency services.

22. Is information being collected from the mental health concerns that are called into the outreach line for CMHA?

CMHA: Yes, it is now being gathered. There is no historical record of this information to review.

BYLAW: Complaints are tracked monthly.

23. When we call to report a noise complaint or 'open drug use' complaint, can assistance be provided? Can you explain what Bylaw handles and what they should be called for?

COSA:

- Open drug use is not something that Bylaw can handle. The issue is complex, particularly with the new decriminalization of the possession of some illegal drugs for personal use.
- Noise complaints, sidewalk obstruction, or littering you can call Bylaw if it is urgent. After 5 pm call the Police.

24. Regarding the Street Solicitation Bylaw, are individuals allowed to "panhandle" anywhere along Alexander Street or downtown? What can or will bylaw do about panhandling?

COSA: Yes, we do have a street solicitation bylaw that is specific to the downtown core. Bylaw does actively move folks along when panhandling in DT and educates them on the Bylaw. They do not usually issue tickets as the persons they would be issuing them to do not have the capacity to pay the fee.

25. Is information being collected from the complaints/concerns that are called into the non-emergency line for RCMP?

COSA: Yes, it is being collected when reported to the City of SA bylaw report form.

RCMP: Yes, it helps guide patrolling areas.