

Report to Council

FROM: Councillor Christine Thompson
DATE: November 12, 2019
SUBJECT: Report to Council

As one of the Councillors sitting at the table of the Grand Forks Social Services Advisory Group, I have attended 2 meetings. Currently, the focus is on finding a suitable location for a Temporary Shelter to house homeless individuals until the end of March. Members of the group have taken on specific tasks in this regard and will be reporting back at the next meeting scheduled for Thursday, November 7th.

At the last Regular Meeting of Council, a resolution was passed that the City of Grand Forks believes it is a shared responsibility with other levels of Government and service providers to have a shelter within the City. Mayor Taylor, to facilitate this, arranged a meeting on November 1st with Karen Heric, RN, at Boundary Hospital. Councillor Moslin and I also attended this meeting as the City's representatives to the Grand Forks Social Services Advisory Group. The discussion included using the old Nurses' Residence or the vacant Mental Health building temporarily. We were advised that the nurses' residence has issues with asbestos and mold. The vacant building does not have showers or laundry facilities. Further there is only one bathroom there. There have been arrangements made to view these facilities on Thursday, November 6th. The Building Inspector and Fire Chief have been asked to accompany us and provide feedback.

October 31st, I attended a Harm Reduction Pillar meeting sponsored by Ankors. Topics discussed included addressing stigma as this can be enabling; stop the negativity that can lead to building trust; updating the map showing where the Sharp containers are and placing one in City Hall. Rural Empowered Drug Users Network (REDUN) meet every 2 weeks. They provide peer group support and advocacy and build capacity to have a voice. Members of this group go "hot spots" in the City and collect discarded used needles. I asked how many they collect and was advised there can be anywhere from a couple to as many as 35. I was also asked if I and other members of Council would be interested in receiving Naloxone training. I said I was interested but could not speak for other Councillors. Needs at the Moto camp were brought forward and included water, porta potties, garbage collection and sewage pumping. In addition, Council is going to be challenged to quit doing something addictive, such as coffee, tea, or cell phone use, to name a few. REDUN will be issuing the challenge when they have more details.

I received a telephone call November 4th, from Cindy Cheeseman, owner of Sunshine Valley Appliance. She asked if BC Housing is still intending to build a facility on the 2nd Street property. I advised her that at this time, Council has not heard anything in this regard. She would prefer not to sell and wants to protect it and the downtown core for future development. She went on to advise that in a green area between her building and the Pawn Shop, her son had observed several used and discarded needles while he was on the roof the building reattaching an awning. This also caused her concern as she maintains that area.

Along with Councillors Korolek, Moslin, and Zielinski, I went on a field trip led by Barry Brandow Sr. to the Overton Creek area, and what I call Lost Lake. Since the last time I went on a field trip, I was disturbed by the amount of water that now encompasses a substantial area outside the fenced off area. I was not able to access the either of the information kiosks nor the seating area. I did observe a water trough with a tap on it. I know that the City has the water rights on this creek, but my question is, has permission been granted for any rancher to use this resource?

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Christine Thompson