

Special City Council Meeting Agenda



Wednesday, February 20, 2019 – 6:00 p.m.
Council Chambers, Guelph City Hall, 1 Carden Street

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Open Meeting – 6:00 p.m.

Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof

Special Council – Public Delegations – Tax Supported Operating Budget and Local Boards and Shared Services Budget

Delegations:

Gary Pomfret on behalf of Wellington Condominium Corporation 158
Kithio Mwanzia, Guelph Chamber of Commerce
Andrew Cleary
Carolyn Weatherson, Rotary Club of Guelph
Jim MacKenzie, Rotary Club of Guelph
Jan Klotz, Guelph Community Health Centre

Correspondence:

Marty Williams and Meg Dunning, Downtown Guelph Business Association
Guelph Community Health Centre
Neil Van Oirschot

Adjournment

In November of 2017 we sent a letter to a wide range of organizations working with people experiencing addiction, poverty and mental health challenges to invite them to a meeting. It said, in part:

"It might surprise you that this invite is coming from a business association. After all, we represent the business and property owners and our mandate is to build the area as one that is flourishing, economically vibrant, and prosperous. But it is also in our mandate to help build a place that welcomes all of our citizens, and we have no interest or intention of driving anybody away... To do better on making Downtown Guelph as safe and inclusive as we can, we need to work together. We need your help, your wisdom, and your ideas."

From that meeting, and several subsequent meetings -- along with some seed funding from the Downtown Guelph Business Association, Guelph Police Service, and the Community Health Centre -- the pilot program with the name Welcoming Streets Initiative (WSI) emerged. And it proved to be a fantastic idea.

Business and property owners in downtown are very well served by this program. They know so much more about the issues, and about the great work that so many agencies, charities, and churches are doing to help address people living with addiction, poverty and mental health challenges. They know more about how to help. They know better who they should call for help. And many have learned techniques to respectfully engage while staying safe. (Source: Program Evaluation, January 12, 2019)

The program has responded to 145 calls from downtown businesses, made over 670 client interactions, and hosted 24 workshops for businesses and community partners. The pilot was rated 3.7/5 and received overall positive feedback from the businesses and property owners.

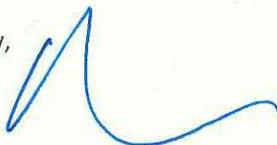
Welcoming Streets is the singular program that connects all the dots. It is a bridge between business and property owners that was crying out to be built. The success of the program is the best testament we can put forward to make the case to continue it. It has made a difference, it has made many people safer and many more feel safer. It has also saved lives.

Planet Bean Co-owner, Bill Barrett wrote:

"Our barista team, saved a man's life Friday by administering a naloxone kit to him as he was unconscious and overdosing in the men's washroom. They did an amazing job! The naloxone was administered, 911 called, the washroom secured, an incident report written and they let me know so I could have Winmar come in and do a haz-mat clean up. They did everything perfectly. Thanks to all of you for providing the education and support for our folks to be able to do this. They (we,you) saved a fucking life!"

We have no hesitation whatsoever in supporting this request to the City of Guelph to provide the necessary funding for this very necessary program.

Sincerely,

A blue ink signature of Marty Williams, consisting of a large, stylized 'M' followed by a wavy line.

Marty Williams, Executive Director

A blue ink signature of Meg Dunning, featuring a stylized 'M' and 'D'.

Meg Dunning, Membership & Community Manager

Guelph CHC Budget Request: Welcoming Streets Downtown Peer Outreach Worker

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to request a delegation at city council on February 20, 2019 for an out-of-budget request for \$83,000 to support the sustainability of the Welcoming Streets Downtown Peer Outreach Worker (WSDPOW) position.

Background:

City of Guelph downtown business owners, like many other communities, have reported ongoing concerns about vulnerable individuals who are often found in crisis in the downtown core. Concerns that have been identified include public drug and alcohol use, discarded drug use equipment, public intoxication and aggressive behaviour. Guelph Police also report receiving a significant number of calls from the downtown area, which often involve vulnerable individuals with complex issues, but who do not always require police intervention. Rather, these individuals are often struggling with addiction and/or mental health challenges, homelessness, and can also be disconnected from the health and social service system.

In the spring of 2018, a partnership formed between the Guelph Community Health Centre, the Guelph Downtown Business Association and the Guelph Police Service to envision what supporting downtown businesses and vulnerable community members could look like. Informed by models that were working in other communities, the partner organizations made the decision to pilot a WSDPOW role for five months, and to evaluate the program's outcomes. Funding for the five-month pilot was shared between the partner agencies. The formal pilot ended December 14th; however, through dedicated funding from the Downtown Business Association, the program is able to have bridge funding from December 14, 2018 – March 31, 2019 while a sustainable funding solution is being developed. The funding model for this program includes, staffing costs, benefits, pension, WSIB, and nominal program supplies and administration.

This program has also been tabled at the **Mayor's Task Force** in January, where **the WSDPOW was recommended as one of the top priorities to be implemented.**



Pilot Program Outcomes

The WSDPOW position began in July 2018 and was dedicated to work in the downtown core of the City of Guelph to address concerns identified by business owners and the public about street involved individuals who may be at risk. The goal of the program was to have the outreach worker respond to situations that do not require police intervention, with a *longer-term vision to achieve an increased sense of safety and inclusion in the downtown core.*

Expected outcomes included:

- preventing unnecessary police involvement;
- facilitating positive relationships between business owners and vulnerable individuals, and;
- ensuring that street involved individuals are linked with the services they need.

A Peer is someone who has lived experience with addiction/ homelessness/ mental health struggles and who can use that experience to readily build trust and positive rapport with those who are most marginalized and act as a bridge to services. Because many street-involved individuals have historically had negative experiences with the formal service system, having a **peer** outreach worker was critical to the success of this initiative. In addition to directly supporting vulnerable community members to access the supports they need and deserve, through training sessions, coaching and support, the peer worker also works to increase the capacity among local business to handle concerns and to build empathy and understanding about people that are vulnerable and living on the street.

While the evaluation in its entirety is not yet complete the preliminary, high-level results are very promising:

- Between July 19, 2018 – October 23, 2018, the peer worker has **engaged in 670 client interactions** related to client escalation, client support/safety, client sleeping on street/walkway, client request for resources and drug use in walkway/street.
- From July 19, 2018 – November 2, 2018 the peer worker **responded to 145 calls for support from local businesses**, which included: support redirecting/de-escalating client, concerns about potential client overdose, advocacy for staff safety, disposal of drug paraphernalia and requests for education.



- As of Nov. 2, the peer worker has conducted **24 workshops and training sessions at local businesses and service agencies** in the downtown core with over 100 participants.
- Downtown crime statistics data showed that WSI was, on average, able to **prevent outreach-type police calls in the range of 12– 23% (compared to previous comparable months with no WSDPOW support)**.

Direct feedback from one local business:

I'm reaching out because I attended one of the peer worker's workshops last week through my place of employment and wanted to give some feedback. I think this program is absolutely a step in the right direction. We should all be working together to support our community. The workshop was honest, personal and an important reality check that I think Guelph needs if we want to move forward increasing safety, improving lives and making our downtown core a better place for everyone.

I believe it's crucial for this program to continue past its trial phase. I believe it's essential for the peer to have team members. It's what our community deserves.

Recommendation:

That Guelph City Council approves the Guelph CHC base funding request for \$83, 000 for the Welcoming Streets Downtown Peer Outreach worker role to be sustained.

Dear Sir/Madam.

Regarding the proposed monthly parking fee increase at the West Parkade from \$93/mth. to \$135/mth., the 44% hike is well beyond normal expectations or a reasonable share of the increased budget requirements.

For the past several years we have absorbed parking fee increases of ~\$5/month (approx.. 5%/yr.) which were not welcome but at least could be understood within the context of ongoing inflationary cost adjustments, however if the City moves forward with the budgeted parking fee increase, we (like many others in the downtown) will need to reconsider the affordability of using the parking garages and instead increase parking congestion on the streets or seek alternative office space outside of the downtown area.

We expect there remains a focus on developing and supporting the downtown business area however the sharp increase in parking fees reduces accessibility and will hurt the business environment for the downtown; as such, I would request that council reconsider the budgeted parking fee proposal and instead institute a more measured & sustainable increase similar to past years.

Thank you.

Neil Van Oirschot