

April 12, 2016

City Council shares concerns of advocates for homeless services, confirms assistance

Council confirmed assistance for all three requests presented by representatives of Grassroots Kind Heart Society, supported by an 850-signature petition, at the April 11 Council meeting.

Mayor Andy Adams confirmed that the City of Campbell River is prepared to offer land, waive fees and licensing, and cover the cost of servicing property, once provincial or federal funding is secured for a centre to assist homeless people in the community.

The City will also continue to lobby BC Housing to keep shelter beds available until a sobering assessment centre is open and help find a location to continue to feed meals close to the shelter until such a centre is operational.

“Island Health has announced funding will be available for six sobering assessment beds in Campbell River, and this will be a positive change to help vulnerable members of the community, but the timing for this service to be up and running is yet to be confirmed,” says Mayor Adams.

To try to fill the temporary gap in services, Council is working in its advocacy role with BC Housing to seek provincial funding to keep the emergency shelter open, and to confirm a suitable location.

Mayor Adams also said Council empathizes with the group’s concern.

“We recognize that the closure of the emergency shelter creates difficulties – both for people who are homeless and for those working to support them,” he says. *“We appreciate Grassroots Kind Hearts formally coming to Council with their request for support, and we share their frustration around gaps in services and delays in developing more permanent solutions.”*

At the meeting, the Mayor emphasized that City Council supports the group’s efforts.

“We are doing our part to ensure provincial and federal governments are aware of the need in Campbell River. We are actively advocating for senior government funding support to alleviate homelessness and invest in affordable housing. We hope that our most recent request to BC Housing will result in some temporary relief until steps toward a more permanent solution can be made,” the Mayor says. *“Through working together with the support of BC Housing, Island Health and local social services organizations, we are pushing to create lasting improvements for vulnerable people in our community.”*

The Mayor also said Council is able and willing to support community efforts by donating land and covering the costs of development permits and utility fees for emergency and long-term solutions.

“We did this for Rose Harbour, for Habitat for Humanity, for the new facility for the Campbell River Hospice Society, and for the first two winters for the extreme weather shelter,” the Mayor says. *“The City is actively working to ensure land is available for more permanent housing solutions.”*

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Background information attached re: supportive housing investment by BC Housing and City of Campbell River