



STAFF REPORT

Title: Downtown Security Patrols - Bridge Funding

Meeting Date: September 14, 2021

Executive Summary:

In January of 2021, Council allocated \$90,000 as seed funding to establish a pilot project for a downtown security watch program. The pilot program was managed by the Cold Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce, and began on May 1, 2021, after a request for proposal process conducted by the Chamber selected Watchdog Security as the vendor.

The vendor patrolled commercial and industrial areas across the City of Cold Lake in a marked vehicle, acting as an extra set of eyes for the business community, municipal enforcement and the RCMP, and also to act as a deterrent. The patrols notified business owners of open windows, doors, and gates, took note of suspicious activity, deterred suspicious activity through brief contacts with the public where they deemed appropriate, and contacted police, municipal enforcement and business owners as required. Monthly reports are attached to this report for May through August.

Funding for the project will run out at the end of October, after a complete six months of operations. The Chamber of Commerce has canvassed for grant opportunities but has been unable to find grants that would include a security initiative as an eligible project. The Chamber of Commerce has reported that the response from the business community has been very positive, and has provided letters of support attached to this report.

The Chamber of Commerce has requested bridge funding for the program into early next year so that a sustainable, long-term funding solution can be found. In consultation with the Chamber of Commerce, administration is researching establishing a Business Revitalization Zone (BRZ) as one possible means of funding the security program's ongoing operation. These options will be brought to council at a later date.

The cost of the program is \$15,000 per month. Administration feels that bridging the program to the end of January 2022 should provide sufficient time to establish another funding model while providing uninterrupted service. This bridge funding could be supplied through \$45,000 in unrestricted reserves.



Background:

On January 26, 2021, Council passed the following motion:

Commercial Security/Night Watch Pilot Project Resolution # CRM20210126.1013

Moved by Councillor Soroka

That Council support the allocation of \$90,000.00 as seed funding for the development of a business security watch pilot program allocated from Council's Crime Reduction Initiative Restricted Surplus (1-2-26-00-258).

Carried Unanimously

Since the City of Cold Lake was approached by the downtown business community at large, several financial institutions, and the Cold Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce, administration began evaluating scenarios and models relating to providing enhanced "security" and/or programming in the downtown area to assist with issues surrounding vagrancy, break-ins and other property crime being perpetrated against businesses.

To date, two streams of programming have been used in an attempt to address the issues brought forward by the business community:

- Social Programing
- Enforcement/Security Programing

Social Programming

Council has also allocated \$200,000 (\$40,000 over 5 years) in its 2021 budget to develop program for vulnerable people in the community. The final terms of reference for the funding criteria have recently been established and accepted by council.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Alberta also amended the funding to include flexibility for assisting vulnerable people including meals which has provided assistance in Cold Lake. The City also has \$25,000 of funding under the MOST program for outreach programming for vulnerable peoples resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The above summary is not intended to be an all-inclusive report on related social programing, however, it does seek to provide a summary of recent projects.

Enforcement/Security Programing

The City of Cold Lake has both the RCMP and Community Peace Officer (CPO) programs to assist with enforcement. These organizations both have attended meetings with local businesses facilitated by the Cold Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce.



These meetings received very positive feedback from the Chamber of Commerce. That being said, similar to the RCMP, the CPOs receive ongoing calls for service and complaints that require follow-up. These statistics can be found in their monthly reports to the CAO. It was noted that an effort to develop a program such as having CPO's patrol downtown every couple hours would have significant impact the calls of the service without adding additional resources. Administration also raised to Council the potential negative impacts of having enforcement officers frequently taking enforcement action.

Based on the discussion, it was administration's advice to not develop such a program under the City program and service level umbrella; rather this program could be grass roots, in partnership with the businesses. This would allow the program to be responsive to individual and immediate needs, which are ever changing.

Alternatives:

- Council may pass a motion authorizing bridge funding for the Downtown Security Patrol pilot program in the amount of \$45,000 to keep the pilot program running through January 31, with funds to come from unrestricted reserves.
- Council may decline to provide funding for the extension of the Downtown Security Patrol pilot program at this time.
- Council may defer the issue and request additional information.

Recommended Action:

Administration recommends that Council pass a motion authorizing bridge funding for the Downtown Security Patrol pilot program in the amount of \$45,000.00 to keep the pilot program running through January 31, 2022 with funds to come from unrestricted reserves.

Budget Implications (Yes or No):

Yes

Submitted by:

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