



STAFF REPORT

Title: Safe Baby Haven Box

Meeting Date: September 17, 2024

Executive Summary:

Safe Baby Haven Box representative Mary Sara Robichaud attended Council's January 23, 2024, regular meeting of Council as a delegation. Mary Sara Robichaud requested that Council implement such a program in Cold Lake.

Understanding that this type of initiative is not being considered by Alberta Health Services (AHS) at this time, the City of Cold Lake (City) has had meetings with Covenant Health Bonnyville Health Centre who of which is supportive of implementing such a program.

The order of magnitude to build the necessary infrastructure at the Bonnyville Health Centre is \$125,000.

Administration is recommending Council's Corporate Priorities Committee (recommend to Council) to provide a seed grant in the amount of \$25,000 for the development on of baby box program at Covenant Health's Bonnyville Health Centre that will be funded from contingency and held in restricted surplus until Covenant Health's Bonnyville Health Centre can provide confirmation that it will launch the program.

Background:

At Council's regular meeting of February 13, 2024, Council resolved to accept the Safe Baby Haven Box delegation presentation made at the January 23, 2024, regular meeting of Council as information, and refer the request to a future Corporate Priorities Committee meeting for further review and a possible recommendation.

Based on some initial investigation on the program, the following are some considerations:

- 24/7 Monitoring (Video and Audio) of the Box System (Both inside and around).
- 24/7 Temperature HVAC Control.
- 24/7 Alarm Systems that has scheduled performance testing (inclusive of time delay for persons to get away).



- Automated Locking system so that when the infant is placed in the box, it cannot be removed by just anyone.
- Quick response times are necessary to ensure that an infant is not left in the box for more than a few minutes (preferably located at a staffed facility with medically trained personnel).
- Security system must be able to distinguish between a baby versus other potential items that may be placed into the box.
- Overall system test to ensure that nothing can be placed in the box without knowledge of the facility personnel.
- Basinet and blankets at the ready, in the box.
- Immediate access and processing with Child Welfare Services.
- Immediate access to health services to confirm health, illness, diseases, viruses, exposure etc.

The above noted is not an exhaustive list of considerations.

Further to the above, administration has been able to locate one (1) program in the province, being the Town of Strathmore's Fire Department. This project was personally taken on by their Fire Chief in 2018.

Based on feedback from Strathmore, the story of an abandoned baby passing away in a dumpster impacted the Fire Chief greatly, and he committed himself to researching how to support preventing this from happening to any newborns in their community. It was advised that Strathmore legal counsel had no significant concerns of potential lawsuits, primarily because they would not be intentionally endangering or harming the baby. A lawyer also acknowledged that they were legally in a "good place" as Fire Departments already have general policy and procedure in place as to how to care for people in emergencies which is applicable to this scenario.

Strathmore's Fire Department advised they have various policies and procedures for the Hope's Cradle Program in their community, and further advised that they are very willing to share those with the City of Cold Lake if we choose to pursue this endeavor.

It is understood that the next "Hope's Cradle" in Alberta is going to be in the Children's Cottage in Calgary, where they have nurses on staff 24/7. The Children's Cottage in our experience (Edmonton) is an organization that takes the children and babies of vulnerable/addicted persons, and children with incredibly high needs related to withdrawal (post birth) or due to developmental neurodiversity and offers respite for short periods of time.



Of potential interest, the World Health Organization (WHO) opposed these programs as they are in contravention to the fundamental human right to know one's lineage and their heritage, although the opposing view would be that a person would know anything if they are not alive.

Strathmore confirms that they received some funding from Gems for Gems (more information below).

- The system received three (3) weeks of testing prior to launching the program which included 3 random tests per day for 21 days and minimum of 63 test runs.
- The system is monitored by a security company and has a dispatch agreement between themselves and AHS being Strathmore District Health Centre (based on the discussion it sounds like they have pre-arranged scheduling for monitoring/dispatching).
- The system and security are tested every week for verification. It is understood that if there is an issue in testing, the system has to return to pre-commissioning phase. They have not had a failure since 2020.
- The system had been integrated into the facilities HVAC system which remains at approx. 16 degrees minimum even when it is -40 outside.
- The costs initial capital cost (in 2018) to implement the program was approx. \$20,000. This number is very volatile pending the ease of facility integration/ renovation.

Gems for Gems has started up Hope's Cradle programs in Ontario, Manitoba and as noted above an Alberta location (Children's Cottage in Calgary)

[About – Gems for Gems](#)

[Hope's Cradle Presentation – Gems for Gems](#)

Further to the January 23, 2024, the following were administrative comments presented to Council on February 13, 2024.

The above noted program is very similar to an Alberta Health Services (AHS) program referred to as the Angel Cradle Program. The following is link to the program for more information and research:

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/findhealth/service.aspx?Id=1064004>



Further to the above, there seems to be only two (2) locations, including the following:

Grey Nuns Community Hospital

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/findhealth/Service.aspx?id=1064004&serviceAtFacilityID=1099410#contentStart>

Misericordia Community Hospital

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/findhealth/Service.aspx?id=1064004&serviceAtFacilityID=1099409#contentStart>

Subsequently, the following resolution was passed:

Resolution # CPC20240618.1002

Moved by Councillor Vining

That the Corporate Priorities Committee postpone discussions regarding the Safe Baby Haven Box initiative, to the September 17, 2024 Corporate Priorities Committee meeting.

Postponed

At Council's April 16, 2024 Corporate Priorities Committee meeting the following resolution was passed:

Resolution # CPC20240416.1008

Moved by Councillor Mattice that the Corporate Priorities Committee postpone the proposal of developing a program, such as an Angel Cradle Program, to the Committees May 21, 2024 meeting, and direct Administration to meet with Covenant Health, and the Bonnyville Health Centre, in an effort to discuss the merits of implementing a program in the Cold Lake and/or Bonnyville area in partnership with the communities.

Postponed Unanimously

Resolution # CPC20240521.1002

Moved by Councillor Vining That the Corporate Priorities Committee postpone the proposal of developing a program, such as an Angel Cradle Program, to the June 18, 2024 Corporate Priorities Committee meeting.

Postponed



On March 4, 2024, the City of Cold Lake had a meeting with Covenant Health of Bonnyville. Understanding that this type of initiative is not being considered by Alberta Health Services (AHS) at this time, the Bonnyville Health Centre supported the idea of creating it and advised that it would do some research and schedule a follow up meeting.

On May 22, 2024, The Bonnyville Health Centre advised that the order of magnitude cost of infrastructure for the “Baby Box” type program would be \$100,000 which can be completed during their current renovation and expansion for at the Health Centre.

Further to the above, Covenant Health requested assistance in their Regional Health Care Service Delivery Plans by obtaining an economic outlook briefing from the City of Cold Lake. Please note that on July 11, 2024, the City of Cold Lake provided Covenant Health with a briefing on the region’s economic outlook. A copy of the briefing has been attached for reference purposes. The document is referred to as “Covenant Health - Lakeland Region Healthcare Planning Briefing.”

At Council’s June 18, 2024, Corporate Priorities Committee meeting, Chief Administrative Officer K. Nagoya provided a briefing on the development of a Safe Baby Haven Box program. He advised that the City of Cold Lake had a meeting with Covenant Health, and the Bonnyville Health Centre, who have both confirmed their interest, and support to move such a project forward, subject to funding.

He also noted that:

- Bonnyville Health Centre is currently undergoing renovations in their Emergency Room.
- Covenant Health has already engaged a design team, who provided an order of magnitude construction estimate in the amount of \$100,000, to complete renovations and install the necessary infrastructure for the program.
- The Bonnyville Health Centre has reached out to the Town of Bonnyville to solicit their interest in funding the project; and
- Covenant Health and the Bonnyville Health Centre would like to meet to discuss the City of Cold Lake's funding commitment.

The Corporate Priorities Committee of Council provided feedback on the development of a Safe Baby Haven Box program and requested more information on the program before establishing the City of Cold Lake's funding commitment for the project.



On July 17, 2024, a follow up meeting was held that included invites for the City of Cold Lake, Town of Bonnyville, the M.D. of Bonnyville and the Bonnyville Detachment of the RCMP. It should be noted that the M.D. of Bonnyville was absent from the meeting.

Covenant Health advised that they need at least \$100,000 to make it happen for within the new walls and doors of the Emergency Room expansion and renovation program. Further, the cradle is built by Gem to Gem. Gem to Gem will have to be paid around \$25,000 for the cradle on top of the reno to create privacy. The project now has an overall order of magnitude budget of \$125,000.

A copy of the presentations made at the meeting as been attached for reference purposes.

The City of Cold Lake has continued to press on behalf of the City Council on the need from such program in the region. With that, Covenant Health advised that once they have confirmed funding, they would reach out to finalize plans. That said, this is a regional initiative of which all municipal partners need to be at the table.

Administration is not aware of any funding announcements from other municipalities, at time of this report.

Alternatives:

The Corporate Priorities Committee may consider some of the following options:

- Recommend that the Council provide a seed grant in the amount of \$25,000 (or alternative amount) for the development of baby box program at Covenant Health's Bonnyville Health Centre.
- The Corporate Priorities Committee may postpone the initiative till Council's Corporate Priorities Committee of September 17, 2024.

Recommended Action:

That the Corporate Priorities Committee recommend that Council provide a seed grant in the amount of \$25,000 for the development on of baby box program at Covenant Health's Bonnyville Health Centre that will be funded from contingency and held in restricted surplus until Covenant Health's Bonnyville Health Centre can provide confirmation that it will launch the program.

Budget Implications (Yes or No):

Yes

Submitted by:

Kevin Nagoya, Chief Administrative Officer