



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY REPORT

Information ☐	Recommendation ☒	Decision Request ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
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To: Mayor Zebian and Members of Council

Submitted by: _____
Deanna Snair, Executive Assistant/Municipal Clerk

Date: November 12th, 2024 Committee of the Whole Meeting

Subject: Drop-in Warming Centre Request for Financial Support Recommendation Report

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Nova Scotia Municipal Government Act (MGA) – Section 65(a) – Authorized Municipal Expenditures - authorizes Council to expend funds for municipal purposes.

RECOMMENDATION or DECISION REQUEST

It is recommended...

that Committee of the Whole recommends Council authorizes the CAO to spend up to \$50,000 to support staffing and supervision related needs to support the drop-in warming centre during the 2024/25 winter months (ending April 15, 2025), to be funding through the West Hants Operating Reserve.

BACKGROUND

Through collaboration with the West Hants Caremongers, community volunteers, POSSE and the Municipality, a drop-in warming centre came to fruition last winter. The centre aimed at helping individuals living rough in tents, vehicles or with no place to go, a safe, warm space to go and shelter from the elements.

The drop-in warming centre operated from December 25th until the beginning of April 2024 and provided much needed comfort, refuge and a non-judgmental space for those experiencing homelessness, couch-surfing or precariously housed individuals.

The success of the drop-in warming centre has not gone without having challenges, but in the end, we have seen that the drop-in warming centre was supportive in assisting the needs of our precariously housed individuals. Our community has a need for a space to support our unhoused population.

Property ✓	Public Opinion ✓	Environment ✓	Social ✓	Economic ✓	Councillor Activity ✓
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DISCUSSION

Permanent affordable, supported housing is the desired solution for many who may be precariously housed or living rough; this will take time and a commitment from all levels of government for immediate actionable solutions to meet the current needs for those experiencing homelessness. Until this occurs, a drop-in warming centre is a stopgap measure needed until something more stable and suitable can happen.

With the arrival of cooler weather, time is of the essence and individuals in West Hants need an option now. The financial support requested would enable the municipality to support community organizations such as The Caremongers, POSSE Project or others to fully and safely provide supervision for the drop-in warming centre to support our unhoused.

The group relied on volunteers to operate last winter. It was their desire to see the centre open all night, every night, however that was not realistic as many of their volunteers worked and were limited to the hours, they were able to volunteer, resulting in the centre being open all night three days a week and the remaining days closing at 1 am. Ideally, the group would have preferred to have the space open all night, every night for the winter months.

Discussions with key stakeholders began during the summer to begin preparing for the upcoming winter season and envisioning what that would look like. Through these discussions, the challenges with last year regarding volunteers and additional supports needed became evident.

The group identified a need for a dedicated resource to enable the drop-in warming centre to function 12 hours per day (7 pm-7am) for those who needed a space warm nonjudgmental space to stay warm, grab a bite to eat and rest.

The request before Council is for the Municipality to provide financial support in the amount of \$50,000 to supplement the volunteer efforts ensuring the center's operation is not interrupted from 7pm -7am every day of the week.

NEXT STEPS

If approved by Council, the CAO's office would work directly with community groups to ensure the best and most effective use of the funds as described above.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If approved there will be impacts to the 2024/25 budget as this is an unbudgeted item and will require Council to identify a funding source. Staff are suggesting the use of the WHRM operating reserve, with an estimated balance on March 31, 2024 \$2,088,610.

ALTERNATIVES

- Council may choose not to support the recommendation.
- Council may choose to provide alternate direction.

ATTACHMENTS

None

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW

I am working alongside Clerk Snair with this project and support the recommendation.

To further support the recommendation, at the time of 2024/25 budget deliberations the operations of the comfort center were unknown as the initiative has been largely provided by the efforts of volunteers and community groups with our assistance. Due to the renovations of the Community Center over the winter of 2024/25, as well as ongoing flood recovery and repairs after the July 2024 flooding, the CC is not available for use. Hosting the comfort center at the pool site has it's advantages as a dedicated space, but it does separate the center from the CC and our staff that provided arm's length support to the users of the centre as well as volunteers in 2023. The independent location at the pool requires funding to provide the needed support for care and comfort plus safety related concerns.

Report Prepared by: _____

Deanna Snair, Executive Assistant/Municipal Clerk

Report Approved by:  _____

Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer