



## ACTION

# Homelessness & Behavioural Issues Task Force Minutes

Monday, January 14, 2013

12:00 noon

Kenora Recreation Centre Meeting Room

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Louis Roussin  
Dave Lucas, OPP Detachment Commander  
Joan Schelske  
Debbie Lipscombe, Treaty 3  
Jack Martin  
Rob Dokuchie  
Randy Seller (via Skype)  
Karen Brown, CAO  
Rory McMillan, Council  
Dave Canfield Mayor (arrived 12:12, left 12:34)  
Heather Lajeunesse, Administrative Assistant

**REGRETS:** none

**Councillor Roussin called the meeting to order at 12:00 noon**

### 1. Introductions

Councillor Roussin welcomed everyone to the meeting and members introduced themselves. Members were asked to send Heather Lajeunesse any further contact information they wish to share, other than their e-mails which are already on file.

An overview was given on the purpose of the Task Force. The ad hoc committee was formed as a result of a recommendation brought forward by the Lake of the Woods Development Commission to develop a community strategy to address homelessness and related issues in Kenora. The supporting report indicated that homelessness and behavioural issues are an ongoing concern for the residents of the community and hinders Kenora's ability to attract business, visitors and new residents to the community. The Task Force will take a leadership role in working towards solving the issue and consists of a group of individuals with diverse backgrounds. In formation of this committee Council is trying to determine what the roles and responsibilities of the City are in assisting the various bodies to deal with the concerns. Every city has the responsibility to assist those in need therefore it should be identified what the City's position will be, what is already being done, and what else can be done.

There has been new direction from the provincial government regarding social services, funding as well as for numerous other items. Social services responsibilities in our areas are currently assigned to the Kenora District Services Board. Most services fall under KDSB but the City has elected to be in the position to provide the funding for additional services. This will not be based on costs but need to identify that cost is an issue and it cannot be sustained alone by taxpayers.

Councillor Roussin gave a breakdown of current social services costs per household and added that costs are increasing and funding will be decreased by government and will be leaving the responsibility to DSABs to provide the services in their funding models. The provincial government requires local DSAB approved plans by January 2014. KDSB now has to determine how to apportion their funding per municipality based on tax payer levy. Another factor which led to the formation of the Task Force is the rising cost of police services. Currently costs are at \$895 per household which is almost the highest in the province.

## **2. Guiding Document for the Group (Terms of Reference, or other)**

Originally Council had directed the Task Force to develop a draft of a Terms of Reference to be brought back to Council for approval. Karen Brown indicated that she will draft something for the committee but inquired as to whether or not a Terms of Reference is required or perhaps a less formal 'lighter' document could be used. There was reference made to the City of Calgary's document as well as another document "A Plan Not a Dream" from the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, which might be used as a guide to drafting the terms for the Task Force.

There was discussion of the primary objective of identifying the main cause as well as other contributing causes of homelessness and behavioural issues in Kenora. It can then be determined if it is facilities, support programs, funding models or attitudes that need to be looked at in order to address the situation. It was suggested that the group read all the materials presented to them to determine what is missing in order for the City to fulfill their commitment as per the social assistance review. The task at hand is to identify what can be done locally for our community as well as the abutting communities in order to deal with the current issues facing us.

It was questioned if the City has the right facilities and locations to provide services, or the funding for such facilities. Location and support programs were also mentioned. It was suggested that the current active programs be identified, as well as support services in terms of assistance (eg. Ontario Works) and guidance programs. There is very little reference made to any of these items in the "Pathway to Employment" plan as directed by the provincial government.

Karen suggested moving to the round table discussion in order to get some feedback on issues and obtaining other supporting information in order to be able to create a draft of some terms to bring back to the committee.

## **3. Round Table Discussion - Addressing Homelessness & Behavioural Issues**

It was agreed that the Task Force will do what they can to educate themselves and obtain a mutual understanding of what the issues are.

It was shared that there are many people in so many different states that it is hard to narrow down to one main concern. Many face addiction issues due to trauma in their lives with alcohol being the number one challenge specific to this. It was suggested that the group look to find ways to deal with the addictions first which will lead people to getting on the right track with priority being the street people as it is currently a crisis situation in the community with many putting themselves in danger every day. It was mentioned that it is known what the contributing factors are but needs to be determined what the City can provide in order to assist.

It was also indicated that there is minimal affordable housing and people are grouping together for shelter which can also sometimes lead to unfavourable situations. There is a new affordable housing initiative in place to assist those with high rental costs up to a maximum but knowing this landlords have in turn raised their rental fees. It was questioned whether providing a home will help with addictions. Perhaps the location of these facilities may assist with some of the occurring problems.

It was suggested that the committee take time to focus on understanding the issues. The homelessness problem can start as early as age three so some are very young when they start to go through the system. These issues have been going on for decades and it can be easy to jump to solutions and spend funds to end up going in circles. Most people want to have a good life but there are barriers that prevent people from starting out this way. It was agreed that these issues are deep rooted in every individual and that it needs to be determined where to start to approach from the City's perspective. It should be determined how the City can play a part to assist as the problem has many angles and is quite complex.

Councillor Roussin stated that is the city's responsibility to deal with the services that are necessary and that agencies have been identified which provide those services. The City has previously turned social services over to the KDSB. The goal is to identify what else the City can do to assist.

There was a suggestion of a managed alcohol facility and reference made to a new facility in Thunder Bay which is proving successful so far. Those who are the most desperate are identified to go into the residence by their own choice. The goal is the facility is to help people get stabilized and eventually employed. Some will be there longer than others but are not on streets contributing to the problem. It was stated that a facility like this in Kenora may go a long way to address the severe and urgent needs in Kenora as there has been no change to the current structure. It was questioned whether or not the City should be providing the funding and facility for this type of service.

There was also an inquiry as to why people are being released into our community from the court system. Remote community people are released into core of the City which adds to the current issues. More efforts should be made to keep people in their communities and to place appropriate controls to monitor.

It was agreed that the role of the committee needs to be determined and suggested to look at other communities who have faced this task and what they have focused on for terms in their applications. There are many institutions currently dealing with local issues and was suggested to identify what they are currently doing and determined whether or not things can be dealt with more efficiently.

Councillor Roussin requested for the next meeting, that each person determine what they see as being the problem, the cause and shortfall. Shortfalls in solving the problem in terms of the City can be determined from there.

Karen Brown added that she envisioned the committee as a group of people giving input for problem solving, and that solutions do not have to be restricted to just the City. If the City cannot address the issues alone then can try to partner with others in order to assist. KDSB is granted funding for the entire Kenora district and each community needs to determine and demonstrate how they are going to manage. The goal is to determine overall what will work in Kenora, to come up with the plan to make changes and lobby the right people to move forward with programs. The Terms of Reference can be used to identify the issues and figure out what is missing and determine from there how we can help with the problem.

#### **4. Meeting Schedule / Next Meeting Date**

It was agreed that the Task Force meet as often as every two weeks in order to come up with something to present to KDSB so that they are able to have their plans in place by January 1, 2014. Meetings will be held at noon, the day of the week is yet to be

determined. Members will review their schedules following the meeting and discuss preferred days. Karen added that she will look to have a draft of terms out in a week

Meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

