

LATE DISTRIBUTION FOR COUNCIL - SEPTEMBER 8, 2009

RR-1



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: September 1, 2009
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Meeting Date: September 8, 2009

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: Managing Director of Social Development
SUBJECT: Supporting Homeless Action Week 2009 Activities

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council approve the allocation of a \$9,300 grant to the following organizations to organize projects aimed at engaging Vancouver residents in solutions to homelessness that will be taking place in the fall and winter months (including Homeless Action Week October 11 - 17, 2009):

- Carnegie Community Centre Association: \$1,300
- Renfrew/Collingwood Neighbourhood House: \$5,000
- Kitsilano Community Centre Association: \$1,000
- Watari Youth Community and Family Services: \$2,000

Source of funds to be the Homeless Action Plan, within the Community Services Group (Housing Centre) 2009 operating budget.

- B. THAT staff to report back in early October with details on Homeless Action Week 2009 events and activities being championed and supported by Vancouver in addressing homelessness.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

COUNCIL POLICY

Council's housing priorities are low and modest income families with children, seniors, low-income singles living in downtown rooming houses and hotels, and those with mental or physical disabilities.

In June 2005 Council adopted the *Homeless Action Plan* which identifies three priorities to address homelessness: improved access to income, more supportive housing and expanded mental health and addiction services.

In July 2009, Council approved funding for a Mental Health and Addictions Plan which includes the implementation of a public education campaign; an Urban Health Summit; and other recommendations.

Approval of grant recommendations requires eight affirmative votes.

PURPOSE

This report recommends approval of funding for initiatives that arose from an innovative July 8th forum on engaging Vancouver residents in solutions to homelessness and which supports Council's initiative on this important issue. If funded, the initiatives will take place during the fall and winter including Homeless Action Week October 11 - 17, 2009. This report also outlines new events and activities being undertaken by City of Vancouver during HAW 2009 to engage additional partners, expand volunteerism and engage communities in solutions to homelessness that staff will report back on October 6th.

BACKGROUND

In the report back to Council (May 5, 2009) on the Homeless Emergency Action Team (HEAT), Council directed staff to develop a Civic Engagement Strategy aimed at involving Vancouver residents in solutions to homelessness at the neighbourhood level.

A first ever "how to" forum on neighbourhood-based solutions to homelessness was held July 8th that provided participants with a sample of the types of neighbourhood initiatives currently under way, in order to generate ideas and interest for other neighbourhoods to participate in Homeless Action Week which takes place October 11-17, 2009.

Philip Mangano, former Executive Director of the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, makes a business case for solving homelessness and has shown the economic impact of housing the chronic homeless population. He has identified political will and leadership, as well as community engagement as critical elements to ending homelessness.

Homeless Action Week (HAW) occurs annually with the goal of bringing attention to and engaging citizens across the province in addressing housing and homeless issues in their communities. HAW is coordinated through the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness.

The City has organized and supported a series of Vancouver HAW events over the last three years, including annual Homeless Connect events that provide direct services to the homeless.

Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) occurs annually and takes place the week prior to Homeless Action Week. Social Development staff are working together to ensure activities being organized for HAW and MIAW are coordinated to further the goal of raising awareness for a more comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing the needs of those with mental health and addictions who are homeless or living in substandard housing (MIAW events are in the early planning stages).

DISCUSSION

To address Council's priority of addressing affordable housing and homelessness and engaging neighbourhoods in the solutions to these issues, an innovative forum was organized July 8th to begin talking about ways in which the broader community could get more involved.

July 8th Forum: Neighbourhood-Based Solutions to Homelessness

This innovative forum brought together a variety of stakeholders to learn about the work currently being done throughout the city to implement the Homeless Action Plan on a neighbourhood level with the goal of inspiring others to begin similar projects.

Sixty-five individuals attended the forum. There was diverse mix of individuals and organizations (e.g., BIAs neighbourhood houses, advocacy organizations, service providers, etc.) in attendance which resulted in a dynamic and rich forum through a sharing of knowledge and experience.

The forum began with the Mayor welcoming guests (Councillors Reimer, Woodsworth and Jang were also in attendance) and local leaders presented work currently being done in neighbourhoods across the city. Smaller break out sessions followed so that participants could brainstorm the kinds of events or activities they might like to do during HAW 2009. The PowerPoint presentations and complete workshop minutes can be viewed at <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/homelessness.htm>.

In summary, the following key strategies were identified for an enhanced HAW 2009 and beyond:

1. Encouraging and supporting local neighbourhoods to address homelessness
2. An enhanced education campaign to raise awareness of the causes and solutions to homelessness,
3. Expanding the provision of direct services to the homeless through Vancouver Connect PLUS.

Homeless Action Week 2009: Bigger and Bolder

1. Encouraging and supporting local neighbourhoods to address homelessness

This new initiative will enhance community capacity to respond to the needs of the homeless in their neighbourhood. A number of organizations are planning events and activities identified in the July 8th forum to take place during Homeless Action Week, as well as throughout the fall and winter. The projects vary in size and location and some are new

initiatives, while others are building on past success. This report recommends Council support these exciting events through funding previously approved to implement the Homeless Action Plan. If approved, this will be the first time grants totalling \$9,300 will support four neighbourhood non-profits to carry out the following activities:

Event	Organization/ Neighbourhood	Date	Funding
<p>Carnegie Health Fair: This is the second year the Fair is being organized. The lane beside behind Carnegie is closed to traffic and a number of service providers will be on hand to deliver health related services including food, haircuts, footbaths, etc.</p>	Carnegie/DTES	September 17, 2009	\$1,300
<p>Kits Foot Clinic: Staff and volunteers at the Kits Shower program have identified foot health as a major issue for the homeless accessing their services. This event will provide foot care, new shoes, etc. for individuals in need.</p>	Kitsilano Community Centre, St. Augustine's Catholic Church, and Grace Vancouver Presbyterian Church	HAW 2009	\$1,000
<p>Under One Umbrella: This is the third annual Under One Umbrella event that will provide direct services to the homeless in the Grandview Woodlands neighbourhood.</p>	Watari Youth Community and Family Services/Grandview Woodlands	January 2010	\$2,000
<p>You Count in the Renfrew Collingwood Neighbourhood The project will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify hidden street homelessness for ongoing outreach targets; • create baseline information to help plan the use limited resources more effectively and to track outcomes; • train 100 volunteers to learn when and how to engage people appropriately; • Educate general population in the neighbourhood around homelessness prevention, supports and resources referral; • Map areas where homeless are residing or traces of homelessness are seen as well as potential housing stocks (for rent signs, etc.) 	Renfrew-Collingwood Homelessness Committee	HAW 2009	\$5,000

2. An enhanced education campaign to raise awareness of the causes and solutions to homelessness

Education and awareness of the causes and solutions to homelessness are critical and a number of activities are being developed for HAW 2009 which will be reported back to Council: a radio and television campaign (featuring the Mayor, Judy Graves and possibly others), public service announcements, posters, transit shelter ads, and the use of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to spread the word about HAW. A community engagement campaign called "*Speak Up for Affordable Housing*" will encourage people to support a call for a national affordable housing strategy. This will compliment an event being organized jointly by the City and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities on October 16th where the Mayor will host other FCM big city mayors during a teleconference calling for a national affordable housing strategy. .

Staff are also developing a new guerilla marketing technique using "green graffiti" to raise awareness about homelessness. Using a power washer and a large stencil (donated by Peregrine Plastics), a message will be left on sidewalks surrounding City Hall and other locations throughout the city directing people to the www.stophomelessness.ca website.

The Homeless Action Week website www.stophomelessness.ca provides a number of resources on how to get involved and to learn more about events happening locally. The website is regularly updated and frequent visits are encouraged to ensure viewers have the most up to date information on events and happenings in their city and neighbourhood. Staff will update Council in early October as planning for events in Vancouver become finalized. Staff will report back on the specific activities identified in this report, events; as well as other regional and local events that could include education initiatives, forums, television promotions, etc. Staff will also ensure events coordinated during Mental Illness Awareness (MIAW) are linked to events being planned for HAW; and will work collaboratively in the development of a broader civic engagement strategy.

3. Expanding the provision of direct services to the homeless through Vancouver Homeless Connect PLUS

The City will go beyond its role in organizing the 2009 Homeless Connect event during HAW and will increase our commitment to fund the event (up to \$10,000 from the Homeless Action Plan) for additional resources, venue rental, food, etc. The year's event will take place in a new larger central downtown location to ensure easy access to the homeless. Partnerships will be expanded with non-profit, private sector, faith-based organizations, as well the Provincial and Federal government and others. Volunteers are critical to the success of a connect event and volunteer outreach will increase to ensure more participate in providing services to the additional homeless we are planning to connect with.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The projects identified in recommendation A will be provided grants from the Homeless Action Plan, within the 2009 Community Services Group (Housing Centre) operating budget.

This is an emerging program that calls for a more robust grant process to build neighbourhood participation using Homeless Action Plan implementation funds. Staff will report back in 2010 on the process and financial implications.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Homeless Action Plan suggests that one of the ways we will know that we have been successful is that all sectors of the community are involved and playing a role to end homelessness. The City's innovative July 8th forum demonstrated there are a number of innovative neighbourhood-based initiatives already under way to address the needs of the homeless. Homeless Action Week provides a unique opportunity to educate and make people aware of the causes of homelessness including the impact of living with mental health and addictions. This report outlines ways in which the City will support neighbourhoods to get involved in implementing appropriate solutions in neighbourhoods across Vancouver.

CONCLUSION

This report provides a summary of a forum held on July 8th to develop neighbourhood-based solutions to homelessness and recommends Council provide grants for four neighbourhoods-based projects to engage Vancouver residents in solutions to homelessness, as well as carry out additional events during Homeless Action Week (October 11-17, 2009).

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