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Coming up at 1 pm, it's this month's social services committee meeting for Wellington County. This is what's on the agenda:



MEETING PREVIEW: County Social Services Meeting for March 13, 2024

After taking February off, the Social Services Committee of Wellington County is getting together again... for the last time. Sort of. Next month, a new joint committee between the City of Guel...

<https://guelphpolitico.ca/2024/03/08/meeting-preview-county-social-services-meeting-f...>

Chair Anderson calls the meeting to order. He notes that this is the last meeting under this structure, the new joint committee takes over next month.

Note: This meeting is coming to you live from 138 Wyndham, the old post office.

No Declaration of Pecuniary Interest.

First item of business: Closed meeting. This will be about the acquisition or disposition of land.

We're out of closed session. Nothing to report, according to Anderson.

The housing reports have been moved up in the agenda. Following up on Reaching Home: One-Time Winter 2023-24 Unsheltered Homelessness Response Funding, Director of Housing Mark Poste says that the number of people helped by this funding is now up to 23 from writing of report.

Mayor Guthrie asks what assurances there are that these people aren't just back out on the street when funding runs out. Poste says staff is working with those people, looking at what they're needs are and what permanent supports are available.

Guthrie asks if there's any of the 23 we know won't be back out on the street on May 1. Poste says he's not sure, but they're co-ordinating with all partners and they're were just wanting to get people out of the cold in the short term. First time in a while some ppl had shelter.

Guthrie asks what's the percentage of fund assigned to each part of the plan. Poste says he doesn't have the breakdown and a full report is coming in June, but the maj. of cost will be the hotel and temp. accommodations.

Guthrie: Portion of people w/ mental health/addiction issues?

Poste: Not sure, but Point in Time count in 2021 showed about 75% of individuals have those issues.

Guthrie: Working with Guelph council on encampments?

Poste: Those conversations are happening.

Cllr Bulmer asks if someone does find permanent housing, if County staff are made aware. Poste says yes, they are, the housing stabilisation team is working with people and the hotels putting them up.

Busuttill thanks Poste for the clarity that the County is *not* just giving people \$40k, that's the scuttlebutt around town. Is there an analysis of needs falling through the cracks? Poste says they're looking at those issues, but doesn't have deets here.

Anderson says he's concerned about next winter, need to be upfront and approach the fed. gov't to get more, and more consistent funding, and working that advocacy at every opportunity. Social Services Admin. Artuso says that's the plan, but they have to be strategic.

Motion to receive the report approved.

Next, 23 Gordon St., Guelph Project Update. The rep from Grinham Architects says that in order to secure funding the project has to start by the end of this month, so they've been working backward from that deadline: building permit app, Committee of Adj., etc.

He credits the "incredible" efforts of City staff, and co-ordinating to avoid potential conflicts. They were able to work through discussion on zoning and get to the building and budgeting. Construction manager appointed in Jan., Fire Dept. involved too.

Building code requirements are changing, it's full residential now and two whole floors have to go thru code upgrades. Original building went up in 90s and there's a new code for seismic resistance, and reinforcement, which also added to costs of renos.

There's also HVAC upgrades required as the second floor comes with a premium due to plan to move it to transitional, or supportive housing at some point in the future. It avoids another expensive retrofit later.

Also, the building is "a little light" on life/safety features, so it's getting a new alarm and sprinkler system. The total budget is a little less than \$5 million.

Poste adds that the report recommends that the committee receive the report and award the contract subject to the presentation of the funding plan at the County council meeting at the end of March.

Cllr Duncan asks if Stepping Stone is contributing capital costs. CAO Wilson says yes, and points to the plan coming at the end of March which will lay out more details.

Recommendation approved.

Recommendation:

That the Social Services Committee receive the report entitled, "23 Gordon Project Update", and recommends to County Council that Demikon Construction be awarded a construction management contract (CCDC5B) with a Guarantee Maximum Price of \$4,961,544.00, subject to presentation of a funding plan by Treasury staff at the March 28, 2024 County Council meeting.

Next, 65 Delhi Street Project Update 4. It's on track to be completed by the end of the year.

Work completed to date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structural steel has been installed on the interior 2nd & 3rd floors - Structural steel has been installed on the 1st floor of the addition - Load bearing block walls have continued on the interior & addition - All temp. structural shoring has been removed - Mechanical & electrical trades have continued their installations - Addition footings & foundations have been formed & poured - Addition foundations are now backfilled - Existing roof eaves have been cut back to accommodate addition - Window blocking has begun
Work to be completed in the next month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mechanical & electrical trades will continue their installations - Precast concrete floor slabs are scheduled for installation - Structural steel & concrete block installation will continue on to the next floor of the addition - Ground floor slab on grade will be poured - Framing will begin - Drywall installation will begin - Construction of elevator shaft will begin - Installation of new services to building will continue as weather permits
State of construction	Completion is currently scheduled for late fall/early winter of 2024

Motion to receive approved.

Social Services Financial Statements as of February 29, 2024. Shauna Calder, Manager of Finance, notes that everything is line, and discrepancies are related to timing of the deliver of certain supplies or funding.

Motion to receive the report approved.

Next, New Wellington-Guelph Centralized Child Care Application and Waitlist. Mandy Koroniak, Director of the Children’s Early Years Division, notes that the waitlists have grown significantly in the last few years thanks to \$10/day childcare.

The centralised waitlist will help childcare providers with their planning, and it will help people looking for childcare by giving them one place to sign up. Cost of software is 100% funded from the feds, and it will be implanted in April.

Cllr Davidson asks if this is a waitlist for all centres. Koroniak says that parents will still have to select and apply to different programs, but the system will automatically promote children as they age, and programs will still be able to manage the placement of their program

Will parents be able to enroll while they're still pregnant? Koroniak says that depends on the program.

Koroniak adds that this will help develop a clear picture for demand having everything in one portal. There's no integration with provincial systems at the moment, but it's something being looked at. This will give data that county can take to ONgov.

Busuttill asks including the County-approved home care. Koroniak says they will, acknowledging that families that only need part-time care find it especially challenging.

How many people are expected to sign up? Koroniak says she's not sure. They have reached out to all groups to make sure that they're migrating to the new system. Estimates that there may be 1,500 people on lists right now.

Motion to receive report for information approved.

Next, 2024 Ontario Works Service Plan Submission. Stuart Beumer, Director of Ontario Works, will present and it's his last presentation because he's taking a new gig at the City of Hamilton.

As for the report, it's the service plan submission for delivering Ontario Works in Wellington. Big change is January 1 re-org of services, OW no longer deliver employment and training support (that will now be done by Employment Ontario).

Beumer says that this is being considered a transitional year by the province, so there's no penalty financially for not meeting their targets, but he notes that they'll still be watching those benchmarks.

The County flagged that the biggest challenge is the low rates of assistance provided, especially housing assistance, and housing is connected to all matters of health and wellness. 20% of caseload been on assistance for 5 years-plus. People staying on assistance longer.

Bulmer asks if that's a province-wide trend. Beumer says that the County rate is actually slightly less than the provincial average. In Wellington, people spend 33 months on assistance on average. Warden Lennox says this is something they should be looking closer at.

Anderson notes that this was also a topic that came out of the Health and Housing Symposium, how rates have remained unchanged since 2017.

Bulmer asks if there's a long-term role for the Sanguen Health Van in the community. Beumer says that people in the community need to rely on many partnerships to get by, a high proportion of ppl on OW have mental health or substance concerns, another barrier.

Motion to receive the report approved.

Next, Summary of January Health and Housing Symposium. Anderson says that Artuso nailed the report when it comes to the outcomes. She says it was successful, and what really resonated is that people were really engaged in conversation.

Better intimation of health and housing was the number one message that came out of the symposium. Also, while there was a lot of convos about downtown, there were also a lot of discussions about the need of people out in county where its hard to find community.

She also said that it's clear that they need the province to help move the ball forward on a lot these items, and there are also limitations given the fact that programs are designed from the top down. Need to listen more to the people receiving the need.

Another big takeaway was that people in the area are caring and that they are willing to rise to the challenge, and that they're also willing to learn and unlearn.

There will be a follow-up symposium on April 17, and it will be open to the public via live-stream in the morning, and covered all day by the media.

Busuttill asks about the kinds of supports Artuso is thinking about. She says that there will be a recruiting process and they will determine what engagement will look like & to make sure that people are feeling included. Also, are they wanting seat at the table or representation.

Guthrie comments that London had success with their symposium that was also invite only despite complaints about the "closed door." He says that he's also heard a lot of positivity about the momentum.

Motion to receive the report approved.

Intimate Partner Violence Presentation Post County Council Update. Anderson says there were some great questions at the meeting, but a lot of the concerns raised fell under the auspicious of the symposium, which is one of the reasons why he included this here.

Anderson says this falls in for the need for more shelter space, though there's presently no determination where that's going to be in the County. Bulmer notes that Women in Crisis were at the symposium so the timing seems right.

Lennox says this issue should concern us all as members of the community, and sometimes when the County gets a presentation like this there's an expectation that they can solve the problem, but they don't necessarily have the resources. How do they reconcile? It's a struggle.

He says IPV doesn't fit the dictionary definition of epidemic, which is not to say that it isn't a very serious problem, but the County can't take it on alone. Anderson agrees, but the big issue is creating awareness, and get in info out there.

Davidson says this was a big issue when he began policing in 1988, and there were still a lack of shelters back then too. He's glad to see it's at the table, even though he's disappointed it's still an issue. Need to find more spaces, find solutions.

Guthrie notes that there was a presentation at the Guelph Police Services Board meeting from front-line officers.

Motion to receive the report approved.

Next, City of Guelph Correspondence to Minister of Health from January 2024 – Back in January, Guelph Mayor Cam Guthrie sent a letter to Minister of Health Sylvia Jones asking for financial support for the Sanguen Health Van.

Anderson praises the letter and says that it would be a shame if they were to lose this service. Cllr Davidson says that he's talked to people in other provinces who have tried to create similar program with little success.

Guelph DCAO Clack-Bush makes the point that there's not just a need for more funding, but for more direct and singular funding, no so much with the piecemeal approach.

Next, City of Guelph Council Resolutions adopted February 14, 2024. Some of which pertain to the County.

On February 14, 2024 Guelph City Council met and approved the following resolutions:

1. That Council respectfully request that the County of Wellington supply the necessary resources and tools, as well as monthly statistics regarding daily availability and access to accessible permanent shelter for all those on the "by name" list, as well as data on the number of offers made to individuals for accessible permanent shelter where the individual has turned down the offer.
2. That staff work with Wellington County, front-line workers and unhoused community members to enhance our Encampments on City Property and Road Allowances Operating Procedure, to include fire prevention education for community members staying in encampments in Guelph.
3. That Guelph's advocacy efforts continue with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Provincial government and the Federal government to address the need for greater municipal funding to deal with housing instability issues, legislative reform to address public space use by-laws, and greater health care funding to address the crisis in our community connected to homelessness, mental health and substance use issues.
4. That in alignment with the County's Health and Housing symposium, that staff commence a public consultation process on the subject of use of public space for shelter, following our standard engagement principles and practices, and with specific intention and engagement with people with lived experience in encampments and the downtown community.

Guthrie says he's heard that we're moving in this direction, especially on the advocacy piece. He feels good about that. Clack-Bush notes that there was a need to put this direction on the public record, it was already underway. Anderson says joint committee helps too.

Bulmer says he's concerned about getting the numbers of people who've refused shelter, not sure politicians need that information. Guthrie says it's not about reporting to council, it's simply about having that data available in case there's a legal challenge.

Clack-Bush notes that in the Waterloo court case on encampments, that was information that the judge specifically asked for in his decision. Guthrie adds that it can also help staff find trends and make better decisions.

Bulmer says he wants to make sure that there's no expectation that County staff has to report to City staff. Lennox says it sounds like this is about assuring the quality of the service they offer, perhaps the committee should send a letter of acknowledgement back to City council

Lennox moves a motion to this end, seconded by Davidson. Motion approved unanimously.

Cork notes that the acoustics in this room is pretty sketchy, and it's not especially welcoming for a public meeting. He's concerned about having future meetings here, and suggests council chambers in admin centre.

Guthrie suggests that might be a conversation to have at the next meeting, the first of the joint committee. Live streaming is also a topic he'd like to discuss (as would I). Anderson says it can be put on the agenda.

Motion to receive the correspondence from the City for information approved.

That's a wrap for this meeting.



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