

Request for Council's Consideration

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Included on Agenda
(Submitted to Municipal Clerk's Office by Noon Thursday) | <input type="checkbox"/> Added Item
(Submitted to Municipal Clerk's Office by Noon Monday) | <input type="checkbox"/> Request from the Floor |
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Date of Council Meeting: Tuesday, November 27, 2018

Subject: Navigator Street Outreach Program Expansion Pilot

Motion for Regional Council to consider:

1. Approval of two years funding of ninety thousand dollars (\$90,000) per year for the Navigator Street Outreach Program expansion pilot for fiscal years 2019/2020 (subject to budget approval) and 2020/2021 (subject to budget approval); and,
2. Authorize the Mayor and Municipal Clerk to execute a Grant Agreement between the Halifax Regional Municipality, Downtown Business Commission (DHBC), Spring Garden Area Business Association (SGABA) and the Sackville Business Association (SBA) with terms and conditions acceptable to the parties and Chief Administrative Officer and subject to review and approval as to form and authority by Legal Services.

Reason:

The awareness and coming to life of hidden homelessness in Sackville has surfaced and become very visible in the last part of 2018. Community meetings with representation from churches, Community Health Board, Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia, Halifax Public Libraries, Acadia Recreation Club, RCMP and HRP, Navigator Street Outreach Program workers, local Councillors and others have been held to dimension the magnitude of the issue and explore solutions. Consideration of an Emergency Shelter was initially explored then dropped in favour of a warming centre; however, through these meeting discussions it became very evident that there is a gap between those homeless and those in positions to possibly help that goes beyond a physical shelter/warming centre. The gap is someone who can identify those who are homeless and what mechanism(s) is there to help people out of their situation.

From previous Council Reports supporting the Navigator Street Outreach Program funding, "The Navigator Street Outreach program (NSOP) was launched in May 2008 to address homelessness and panhandling in downtown business districts. The program is a proactive, positive lifeline for individuals who struggle with securing and maintaining housing and employment due to addictions, mental health issues and homelessness. NSOP works on the street, as opposed to within the shelter system."

Although HRM has an Affordable Housing Work Plan that has its roots in the work of the Housing and Homelessness Partnership, it focusses on means to create affordable housing options - not identifying and helping those individuals who find themselves in immediate crisis.

HRM's Public Safety Strategy does identify areas of intersection between NSOP and the strategy's goals. The following is provided by Amy Siciliano, PhD, HRM's Public Safety Advisor. References and sources are provided in Dr. Siciliano's original document.

“Addressing the needs of homeless and precariously housed individuals in Sackville Research shows that having a place to call home is a fundamental protective factor to build resilience and lessen the likelihood of being involved in the criminal justice system—either as a victim or offender. The most recent Point in Time count report for HRM underscores this relationship: over half of all respondents had had interactions with police in the past 12 months, and 30% had been to either prison or jail.

Compared to the urban core of HRM, much less is known about the homeless and precariously housed population in Sackville. The number of households in core need is one indicator of who is at greater risk of homelessness. Census data from 2016 show that 10.27% of Sackville's households are in core housing need, with unaffordability identified as a contributing factor for 80% of households.^[1]

Navigator Street Outreach program (NSOP)

The Navigator Street Outreach program (NSOP) was launched a decade ago to address homelessness and panhandling in downtown business districts. The program is a proactive, positive lifeline for individuals who struggle with securing and maintaining housing and employment due to addictions, mental health issues and homelessness. While NSOP operates in the downtown core of Halifax, its 2017-2018 Annual Report documents that 3% (11/304) of its service users reported their home base as Sackville.^[2]

NSOP and the Public Safety Strategy

Below is a brief description of NSOP impact on community safety and well-being through the lens of the Public Safety Strategy. The program addresses two priority areas and four actions in the Public Safety Strategy:

Priority Area 1: Build Resident Resilience

Action 11 Deliver municipal programs and services that enhance the mental health of residents, particularly youth and seniors.

Action 13 Provide crisis support for children, youth and adults experiencing a mental health crisis.

Many of the individuals who access NSOP services seek assistance in navigating and accessing health care. NSOP works to break down barriers to access through a wrap around approach that meets the individual's unique and often complex needs.

Last year, the NSOP program provided a sizeable number of services in the following health and wellness domains: mental health (42); addictions support (21); medical support (42), legal support (14)

Priority Area 3: Ensure Safe Spaces

Action 21 Ensure the availability of drop-in services and warming/cooling centres for vulnerable, street-involved residents.

Action 24 Monitor emerging homelessness trends and support initiatives to address chronic and episodic homelessness.

One of the key supports that NSOP provides is helping clients find a place to call home. The types of support the program provides includes apartment set up kits, damage deposits, rental arrears, power arrears, and relocation services.

Of the 305 service users of NSOP in 2017-18, 53 secured housing and 7 were assisted in returning to their home community. The NSOP program also prevented 22 evictions. The NSOP report also noted that of the 29 clients who secured housing in the previous fiscal year, 20 maintained their housing.

In addition to addressing these specific actions in the Public Safety Strategy, NSOP helps individuals secure employment, another key protective factor for building resilience and increasing safety at the individual and community level. Through its employment support programs, NSOP works with individuals to identify and remove barriers to employability and partners with other organizations and agencies to help individuals access employment opportunities. In the past year, 49 NSOP clients secured employment and 19 were assisted in upgrading their training and education. Five individuals were supported in relocating for the purposes of employment. Other supports offered include supplying transportation, telephones, lunch and work equipment.

In sum, the NSOP is one of the few programs in HRM offering direct outreach to homeless and precariously housed individuals, and as illustrated above, is making an impact on the safety and well-being of individuals at high-risk of involvement with the criminal justice system and by extension, contributing to safety and well-being at the community level.

Informal discussions with participants at the Housing symposium suggest that the program could be transferable to Sackville, but the outreach component would need to be modified, given that Sackville's homeless and precariously housed population is less visible and not necessarily street-involved. At the same time NSOP has been designed to meet and address the needs of a very specific population. As noted above, little is known about the extent of homelessness in Sackville—but what is known is that much of it is hidden. Designing effective programs will require a much deeper understanding of this population and its needs. In addition to engaging NSOP and its partners in researching and designing programs, exploring partnerships with existing community-based venues such as the library and the food bank may help inform effective outreach strategies and generate knowledge about how best to respond to the unique needs of this population in Sackville.”

Claudia Jahn, Program Director, Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia writes (letter attached):

“Homelessness and housing insecurity presents itself quite differently on the outskirts of the City. Fewer, or often no housing and poverty related services, and emergency shelter/housing options result in hidden homelessness. Anecdotal reports from church leaders, Libarians, and service providers indicate that there are individuals who are absolutely homeless sleeping rough in wooded areas, abundant buildings and/or couch surfing. Besides providing direct services a Street Outreach Navigator program will allow the collection of quantitative data to measure the scope of the homelessness issue in Sackville and to develop appropriate systemic interventions. “

Navigator Street Outreach Program Expansion Pilot

Asa Kachan, CEO and Chief Librarian Halifax Public Libraries writes about the growing homelessness awareness over the last six years, and their staff's engagement (letter attached):

“Through the formation of strong relationships, library staff become increasingly aware of the needs and challenges people that without stable housing face on a daily basis. In response, library staff helped link vulnerable community members with free clothing resources, provided them with access to transportation, and have assisted in responding to emergency food requests. This success is in part due to the close relationship we have built with other resources in the community. Together we have worked to better understand and address the escalating housing issue. The creation of a Street Navigator position for Lower Sackville, similar to those that exist in other HRM neighbourhoods, would be a significant development towards helping many of the individuals we see on a daily basis to better meet their basic needs and hopefully find a way out of poverty.”

This request recognizes the changing homelessness environment – beyond the existing resources and shelters first encountered when the Navigator Street Outreach Program was initiated some ten years ago.

Outcome Sought:

A two-year HRM funded Navigator Street Outreach Program (or variation of) pilot that provides direct, street level support to identify and help those who find themselves homeless in Sackville. The learnings from this pilot be evaluated and used to identify and reduce the numbers of homeless throughout all HRM.

Councillor Steve Craig

District 15



Halifax, November 19th 2018

Dear Councillor Steve Craig, The Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia (AHANS) in its role as the Community Entity for the Federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy is delighted to provide this letter of support for your application for a Street Outreach Navigator program for Sackville.

Mobile Navigator programs have proven themselves locally as an effective intervention in addressing the need of street involved individuals by connecting them to housing, employment and other services. Meeting individuals where they are is of particular importance in the context of Halifax's large geographic area and its centralized service clusters in the downtown core of the peninsula.

Homelessness and housing insecurity presents itself quite differently on the outskirts of the City. Fewer, or often no housing and poverty related services, and emergency shelter/housing options result in hidden homelessness. Anecdotal reports from church leaders, Librarians, and service providers indicate that there are individuals who are absolutely homeless sleeping rough in wooded areas, abandoned buildings and/or couch surfing. Besides providing direct services a Street Outreach Navigator program will allow the collection of quantitative data to measure the scope of the homelessness issue in Sackville and to develop appropriate systemic interventions.

If you have further questions regarding our support for the Navigator Position for Sackville please feel free to contact me at 902.406.1777 or by email at cjahn@ahans.ca

Sincerely,

Claudia Jahn

Claudia Jahn

Program Director
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November 20, 2018

Councillor Steven Craig
Halifax Regional Council

Dear Councillor Craig:

Re: Proposed Sackville Street Navigator

I am pleased to write a letter in support of your request to Council to establish a Street Navigator position in Sackville.

Over the past six years, Sackville Public Library has been exploring ways to help address homelessness in the community. To respond to the increasingly complex needs faced by individuals, library staff have worked to seek support and resources from other organizations and people in the Sackville community. The resulting informal network has recently become more formalized through your engagement and coordination.

Great work is already underway through the Sackville Library in response to homelessness in Sackville. Through the formation of strong relationships, library staff have become increasingly aware of the needs and challenges people that without stable housing face on a daily basis. In response, library staff helped link vulnerable community members with free clothing resources, provided them with access to transportation, and have assisted in responding to emergency food requests. This success is in part due to the close relationship we have built with other resources in the community. Together we have worked to better understand and address the escalating housing issue. The creation of a Street Navigator position for Lower Sackville, similar to those that exist in other HRM neighbourhoods, would be a significant development towards helping many of the individuals we see on a daily basis to better meet their basic needs and hopefully find a way out of poverty.

As a community-focused organization that readily welcomes people who self-identify as homeless or housing insecure, Halifax Public Libraries fully supports your request for funding toward a Street Navigator position in Sackville. As we have already indicated, if the position is approved, we would be happy to provide space for the Street Navigator to



Halifax Public Libraries
60 Alderney Drive
Dartmouth, NS B2Y 4P8

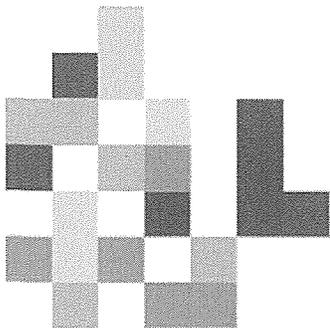
t. 902-490-5744
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halifaxpubliclibraries.ca

work from the Sackville Public Library, thus minimizing the associated incurred costs of the position. We look forward to working together, building on the resources and care the Library already provides to the Sackville community.

Sincerely,

Original Signed

Åsa Kachan
CEO and Chief Librarian



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