



Staff Report

Report To: River District Board of Management
Report From: Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services
Meeting Date: November 13, 2024
Report Code: CS-24-097
Subject: Community Partner Meeting Regarding Issues in the River District

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-24-097 respecting Community Partner Meeting Regarding Issues in the River District, the River District Board of Management receives the report for information purposes.

Highlights:

- A key strategic objective of the River District Action Plan is to create a safe and clean space.
- At the meeting on September 11, 2024 a River District Business owner identified concerns with issues in the River District.
- This report updates the Board on actions taken since the last meeting.

River District Action Plan Alignment:

River District Management

Strategic Objective: Create a safe and clean space

Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Previous Report/Authority:

[Public Question at the September 11, 2024 River District Board Meeting](#)

Background:

At the September 11, 2024 River District Board Meeting, a member of the public asked a question about what the River District Board was doing to support businesses in the River District and identified issues relating to drug use and homelessness that are impacting the area.

Following that meeting, staff met with the Chamber of Commerce and Chair of the Board and then convened a meeting inviting community partners to attend a meeting on October 18, 2024.

Analysis:

Twenty individuals from a variety of organizations attended the meeting including:

Pam Coulter – Director of Community Services, Owen Sound
Kate Allan – Director of Corporate Services, Owen Sound
Dave Bishop – Inspector, Owen Sound Police Service
Tim Simmonds – City Manager, Owen Sound
Josh Gibson – Manager Housing Programs, Grey County
Sharon Irwin – Manager of Community Housing, Grey County
Scott McKay – Director of Client Services, CMHA
Heather Prescott – RN, Brightshores Health Services
Colleen Trask Seaman – Executive Director, OSHaRE
Dave Parsons – Chair, River District Board
Annette Pedlar – Executive Director, SafeNSound
Rachel Patterson – M’Wikwedong Program Coordinator
Kevin McNab – Director of Paramedic Services, Grey County
Francesca Dobbyn – Executive Director, United Way of Bruce Grey
Tim Nicholls Harrison – CEO/Chief Librarian, Owen Sound

Diane Austin – CEO, Chamber of Commerce

Tiffany James – Communications Coordinator, Chamber of Commerce

Jason Crone – Board Member, Chamber of Commerce

Viveca Gravel – River District Coordinator

Mr. Bob Nicol (Nicol Insurance) was invited to attend the meeting.

City staff facilitated the meeting and attendees were asked the following questions:

- Highlight the services or work by your organization that supports people who are homeless or who are living with mental health issues and addictions.
- In 2 words describe your vision for the River District.
- Brainstorming – gaps and opportunities to work collaboratively to fill the gaps.

A subsequent meeting of the partners will be held to further discuss ideas and opportunities that were raised by those in attendance including:

- River District Outreach Role (Unity Project) (proactive);
- Education;
- Communication;
- Housing and wrap around support;
- Shelter;
- Funding gaps;
- Public washrooms; and
- Poverty reduction.

Financial Implications:

Poverty was noted as a critical issue.

Many of the agencies at the table are funded, in part, through private donations and funds or grants that are not a stable source of funding.

It is acknowledged that there will be costs to exploring the ideas to fill the gaps.

Communication Strategy:

Ongoing with agencies, City and River District Board and businesses.

Consultation:

All the community partners were part of the discussion.

Attachments:

None.

Recommended by:

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services at, pcoulter@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 Ext. 1252.