Subject: Emergency Shelter in Tillsonburg
Report Number: CLK 20-11
Author: Donna Wilson, Town Clerk
Meeting Type: Council Meeting
Meeting Date: Monday, February 10, 2020

RECOMMENDATION
THAT Council receives Report CLK 20-11 Emergency Shelter in Tillsonburg, as information.

BACKGROUND
AT the Council meeting of December 9, 2019, Council passed the following motion:

Moved By: Councillor Parker
Seconded By: Councillor Esseltine
THAT Report CAO 19-17 Shelter During Extreme Cold Warnings be received;

AND THAT Council approve in principle a program to provide overnight emergency shelter during declared extreme cold warnings; and

THAT staff work with volunteer agencies to ensure that appropriate volunteers are available to manage the centres and report back to Council with costs and a proposed policy to provide authority, conditions and guidance on the operation of the emergency shelters.

Carried

In January Town staff met with local agencies to discuss the idea of the Town hosting an emergency shelter in the event that Southwestern Public Health issues an Extreme Cold Warning. There were representatives from the Salvation Army and the Faith Presbyterian Church present at the meeting.

DISCUSSION
The local agencies present indicated that there are on average 10 homeless people in Tillsonburg and that the number decreases during the colder months to approximately 1-2 homeless people. During the colder months individuals join rehabilitation programs or couch surfer in order to get off the streets. The Salvation Army indicated there are opportunities for homeless individuals to obtain emergency shelter both in-Town and out of Town. One of these options includes the Inn out of the Cold emergency shelter which operates from mid-November to March/April located at Old St. Paul's Anglican Church
in Woodstock. Free transportation for individuals to this emergency shelter is funded by Oxford County Public Health and the Salvation Army. Social assistance is offered to individuals who utilize the emergency shelter which provides an opportunity for individuals to obtain support for mental health, addiction, employment and housing; this system is designed to lead individuals to becoming self-dependent. The Salvation Army also works with a local motel to arrange short term accommodation for in need individuals.

The local agency representatives provided staff with a better understanding of the needs of at risk individuals, the requirements for operating an emergency shelter and the associated liability considerations related to operating an emergency shelter. Both agencies indicated they could arrange certain resources including bedding, food and volunteers to support an emergency shelter hosted by the Town. The agencies indicated that their volunteers would require training. The Town would need to set a standard for volunteer training; this could include the completion of health and safety training, First Aid training, CPR training, Naloxone training, de-escalation training etc. It was noted that many of the volunteers work during the day which would make volunteering overnight challenging. The Town has trained staff to facilitate CPR, basic first aid and de-escalation training. Oxford Public Health could provide sharps and Naloxone training. Additional requirements for volunteers would need to be considered including the submission of a Vulnerable Persons Screening, a Criminal Record Check, liability forms etc. The Town would be required to provide a secure space, staff support, security services and special intensive cleaning services.

The operation of an emergency shelter involves a number of risks to occupants, volunteers, staff and the community including drugs, drug paraphernalia (sharps), disease and infestation (bed bugs), drug overdose, violence and mental health issues. An emergency shelter would have associated costs for security services, special intensive cleaning services and staff time. A contract with a security service would need to be considered in order to obtain service on short notice. Currently the Town has contracted a company to clean the secured cells at the OPP station which could compare to the risks associated with cleaning a shelter. Staff estimates the cost of cleaning the Community Centre shelter area following the activation of an emergency shelter would be approximately $360. The municipality has also secured a security company in the past to oversee the Turtlefest site overnight at a cost of $430.00 per guard, this figure could be used as an estimate of security for an overnight emergency shelter. The Town should also consider the possibility of no one utilizing an emergency shelter either from being unaware due to communication challenges or unwillingness. Unlike the services found in Woodstock, the Town does not have the resources to provide support for mental health, addiction, employment and housing needs.

Staff reached out to the administrator of the Inn out of the Cold shelter in St. Thomas to seek further guidance on this matter. This communication further emphasized the magnitude and complexity of operating an emergency shelter. The administrator cautioned that opening a shelter without trained professionals on sight can put occupants, staff and volunteers at risk.
In conclusion, staff is recommending that the Town not proceed with implementing a program to provide overnight emergency shelter during declared extreme cold warnings. There are a number of local programs aimed at supporting the vulnerable population which the Town could support in ways such as funding or offering free training to local volunteer agencies during business hours for example.

It should also be noted that the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan required by January 2021 is underway. A consultant has been hired by Oxford County Clerks which will facilitate a number of public consultation sessions within each Oxford community. A Community Safety and Well-Being Plan is a way to work together to address common objectives to ensure Tillsonburg is a safe, healthy and vibrant community. The vision is to work together to achieve sustainable communities where everyone feels safe, has a sense of belonging, opportunities to participate, and where individuals and families are able to meet their needs for education, health care, food, housing, income, and social and cultural expression.

CONSULTATION
Staff consulted with local agencies including the Salvation Army and the Faith Presbyterian Church. Staff consulted with the administrator of the Inn out of the Cold shelter in St. Thomas.

FINANCIAL IMPACT/FUNDING SOURCE
An emergency shelter would have associated costs for security services, special intensive cleaning services and staff time. A contract with a security service would need to be considered in order to obtain service on short notice.

COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN (CSP) LINKAGE

1. Excellence in Local Government
   - Demonstrate strong leadership in Town initiatives
   - Streamline communication and effectively collaborate within local government
   - Demonstrate accountability

2. Economic Sustainability
   - Support new and existing businesses and provide a variety of employment opportunities
   - Provide diverse retail services in the downtown core
   - Provide appropriate education and training opportunities in line with Tillsonburg’s economy

3. Demographic Balance
   - Make Tillsonburg an attractive place to live for youth and young professionals
   - Provide opportunities for families to thrive
   - Support the aging population and an active senior citizenship
4. Culture and Community
   □ Promote Tillsonburg as a unique and welcoming community
   □ Provide a variety of leisure and cultural opportunities to suit all interests
   □ Improve mobility and promote environmentally sustainable living
CLK 20-11

Report Approval Details

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This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Kyle Pratt

Kyle Pratt - Feb 5, 2020 - 2:55 PM