

STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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DATE: June 23, 2023

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Adam Davey, Director of Public Safety

SUBJECT: Bylaw Services: Best practices update

ATTACHMENT(S): N/A

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated June 23, 2023 titled 'Bylaw Services: Best practices update' from the Director of Public Safety.

PURPOSE:

To provide information on the training and implementation plan for defensive tool options as well as the permanent adoption of the Naloxone Program within Bylaw Services. These new tools and training ensure Bylaw Services staff are provided with adequate protections so they can complete their duties in a safe manner. The new training program and tools assists the City's Bylaw Services Division in conforming to industry 'best practices' within peer cities across the province.

BACKGROUND:

The role of Bylaw Officers in municipalities throughout British Columbia has evolved dramatically over the past 3-5 years. Most municipalities now experience substantial issues involving persons with addiction and mental health issues as well as those who are precariously housed. The Provincial and Federal governments now recognize these as social and health issues and not criminal matters. At present, there appears to be a gap in service response related to downtown disorder. The expectation placed on Bylaw Officers is that they will fill this gap.

This situation has been apparent in the City of Prince George and led to the creation of a dedicated team to patrol the downtown core as well as civic facilities, through a service enhancement in 2020. Bylaw Services in Prince George now has twenty-one (21) officers that all have contact in their daily duties with individuals who are experiencing mental health issues, drug addiction and in some instances homelessness. They also come into contact on a regular basis with individuals that are angered by this situation and attribute the situation to inaction on the part of the municipality.

This translates into a precarious situation for the Bylaw Officers on the street as they have limited legal authority and currently no tools that they can use to protect themselves should their interactions with the public turn hostile and potentially violent. Bylaw staff do regularly take part in conflict de-escalation and other verbal training to de-escalate potentially volatile situations. This does not always work. Therefore, like our peer municipalities, other self-defensive tools are required to be carried to ensure the safety of staff. This is consistent with industry and OHS best practices.

Unfortunately, the Bylaw Officers working in other parts of Prince George are not immune to these types of situations. Very often people are angry and confrontational when Bylaw Officers attend their residence to deal with seemingly routine complaints such as parking or minor property maintenance issues. Animal Control Officers are dealing with aggressive dogs and often aggressive dog owners daily. Even Parking Control Officers have been followed, yelled at, and physically threatened.

As a result, decisions have been made across British Columbia to bolster employee safety by training and equipping all bylaw officers with Defensive Batons, OC spray and Handcuffs. The City of Prince George Bylaw Officers will also be carrying these defensive force options starting on August 1, 2023, to align ourselves with best practices of other comparable municipalities.

There will also be an expansion of the Naloxone Pilot program which has been very successful since it was implemented in November 2022. Since that time, Naloxone has been administered on 21 occasions with success every time. This success translates into 21 lives not being lost. Requests have now come from other employees within Bylaw Services to also be trained so they can assist when required as they are also meeting individuals experiencing overdoses in their daily duties throughout Prince George. Since the implementation of the Naloxone Pilot Program relationships with individuals in the downtown have been easier as they understand that we are there to help and will help when required. Relationships with non-profits have also improved as carrying and administering Naloxone aligns with the principles of Harm Reduction.

Staff appear to be very supportive of these initiatives, and administration has included their feedback into the new program.

The table illustrates the tools that are available to Bylaw Officers in other municipalities throughout British Columbia:

Municipality	Defensive Baton	OC Spray	Handcuffs	Naloxone
Penticton	yes	yes	yes	yes
Victoria	no	yes	yes	yes
Langley	yes	yes	yes	yes
Vernon	yes	yes	yes	yes
Revelstoke	yes	yes	yes	u/k
Maple Ridge	yes	yes	yes	yes
Langford	yes	yes	yes	yes
Delta	No	yes	no	u/k
Smithers	No	Yes	Yes	no
Surrey	Yes	Yes	yes	yes
Kelowna	yes	yes	yes	yes
Duncan	no	yes	yes	no
Nanaimo	yes	yes	yes	yes

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

In 2022, the City undertook a pilot project for Bylaw Services staff to carry and administer Naloxone in rare instances when Emergency Services were not yet on scene. Since then, Bylaw Services have deployed Naloxone 21 times. Administration intends to adopt the pilot project on a permanent basis.

Additionally, Bylaw Services conducted a 'best practices' and training program review of peer municipalities. It was found that the City ought to enhance the training program and provide additional tools for officers to use, to ensure they are able to perform their duties in as safe a manner as possible. Bylaw Services will implement 'best practices' by formalizing a training program to include carrying defensive tools and Naloxone.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Adam Davey, Director of Public Safety

PREPARED BY: Charlotte Peters, Manager of Bylaw Services

APPROVED:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting Date: [Enter 2023/07/10]