

## TOWN HALL: RUTLAND COMMUNITY SAFETY & POLICING NOTES

Lynn J introduced herself and acknowledged we are located on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the sylix/Okanagan people.

Lynn J. welcomed everyone and introduced Colleen Cornock (Community Safety Services Manager) & Corporal Michael Kube (RCMP Community Safety Unit) as our speakers.

Lynn J. noted our Town Hall Code of Conduct.

**Colleen Cornock** introduced herself and noted she grew up in the Rutland area and parents still live here. She is open to hearing from everyone. Has been with the City of Kelowna for 18 years. Community lead in the Kelowna's Community Safety Plan addressing: crime prevention, housing/homelessness, domestic/intimate partner violence, mental health/problematic substance use, and racism/discrimination, community safety and several other topics.

**Corporal Michael Kube** also has family ties to Rutland and worked in other communities and is now back in Kelowna from Vancouver. Worked general duty in Rutland area for a year and is now with Community Safety Unit. (The unit has) Foot/bike patrol officers, (they deal with mental health, homelessness issues, etc) and members in Community Court. (They have) Officers in plain clothes (who are) also used to address shoplifting. Kelowna has seen uptick in protests since COVID and his department ensure people protest respectfully. Community Policing involves youth officers, mental health (CMHA), Outreach, housing, addictions counseling, etc.

**Lynn J opened floor to questions**...Asked if there is a long term plan to mitigate issues that may occur surrounding the new MSDPR (Social Service) office? Colleen noted a newly formed Social Disorder Committee it includes various City departments that come together weekly to address problem areas – the Committee is aware of the new MSDPR office and will be monitoring the area for potential impacts.. The Social Disorder Committee engage with various agencies to determine if and where actions are required.

**Question:** Individual says he has lived by (Rutland Lion's) park sees individuals using drugs at park and concerned that many people can't use bathrooms because they are used as a "club house" by the homeless and also a bicycle chop shop. So bathrooms are not accessible for other people using the park including children. His question: What can be done about the bathroom not being available to other users of the park beside the homeless? Also he mentioned there are many issues at parks including when the washrooms are closed for the night, the homeless go to the bathroom in the park and leave feces and urine. He also questioned why homeless have lunch and dinner delivered to them?

**Answer:** Colleen noted the volume of issues has increased and noted don't have enough bylaw people to address the amount of issues. (Lack of employees in Bylaws. Number of employees needed is not keeping pace with the number of homelessness

and community safety issues.) Colleen: **we definitely want people to continue to phone in reports** – mentioned there are issues happening at many parks throughout the whole city. Further, Bylaw has limited authorities and therefore enforcement alone is not sufficient to address the current issues impacting our community. Part of rationale for services, such as the Gospel Mission delivering meals to where homeless people are camping is to create connections to gain trust and get help for homeless. Individuals are allowed to be in Parks as long as not living there as long as no tents or structures. Noted there is a fine line between going in heavy handed clearing people out and creating connections that may lead to helping get them off the street.

Corporal Michael Kube **urged everyone to continue calling in** and understands frustrations. Noted limited resources. Reports to Police are dispatched based on the Level of priority. Level 1 (violence, someone may be hurt) to Level 4 (no violence and not time sensitive).

Colleen noted homeless count has tripled over the last few years.

Kube noted a previous policing system called 'Street-check' where police could randomly stop and check people to see if they had a criminal record or doing something illegal, noted this is now against policy. Many changes to laws have decreased the ability of police to take action.

Lynn S. noted confusion around terminology and asked what Colleen can do to create a safer community in Rutland.

Colleen said people from her department will meet with businesses and residents and do safety/security audit assessment. Look at property and theft protection – crime prevention, and personal safety. Also they are launching a Bike valet Project (downtown) – noted theft of bicycles has become major issue downtown. Partnering with non-profit to do this. Free bike lock program at Parkinson Rec Centre and looking for another location. \*Noted working with URBA to find lock location for Rutland. Audience suggestion for bike locks at Athens Pool and Sport Centre. Colleen noted each individual's issues around safety may be different from others in the room. Colleen's team is leading the implementation of the 5 year Community Safety Plan, which has a goal to increase safety for all and reduce the potential for victimization. Throughout the implementation of the Plan, there will be opportunities for members of the community to provide input on the major actions.

Noted that provincial/federal level help (and financing) is needed.

Noted counts (of homeless people) may be much higher as it includes only tents or structures.

Cpl Kube: Noted the staffing issues in society after COVID, also affect RCMP staffing. Noted 6 new officers allotted for in latest budget.

Cpl Kube noted there is an active traffic unit right now - particularly in summer they have to divert a number of different units within the Detachment to answer 911 or priority calls.

Mental health, addictions, and such fall under Provincial jurisdiction, not Municipal or Federal.

Colleen noted there is advocacy role in her department as well.

Lynn J asked what the speakers thought of **the city of Kelowna requesting that the Provincial decriminalization law also exclude allowing drug use in City Parks and playgrounds.**

Colleen said she could not speak to that at this time.

**Answering the question: Cpl Kube** noted any improvements that can be made toward safety are good, and that legislated drug use was dropped on municipalities to deal with. Decriminalization is a BC Provincial law, not yet in other parts of Canada! Noted the Federal Cannabis Act authorizes that actions may be taken by police regarding public use of cannabis but RCMP have no authority regarding public use of hard drugs. Colleen noted they are monitoring what is happening regarding the new municipal bylaw in Kamloops to ban drug use in public parks.

**Question:** Lots of homeless people coming from Vancouver and other places – Are there plans/preparations to deal with increased homeless during summer months?

**Colleen answered:** previously funding was through provincial grants and are looking at expanding accommodation for unsheltered and vacationers. Launching bike theft prevention program, education around property crimes, continued provincial supports for homeless people, noted Rail Trail tent City, etc. She mentioned the city and her department are concerned as well – More bylaw employees, housing, etc. will be needed.

**Michael Kube** answered same question: looking at increasing overtime for police during summer months – deployment of other resources including foot/bike patrol. Police/mountain bike patrols can be more pro-active in the community. A lot of social disorder will not be fixed by or through policing.

**Question by Lady who lives across from Ben Lee Park** noted she has called RCMP several times – she would like clarification about people doing hard drugs in the park but people cannot smoke in the park? Asked who do we talk to about having changes made? Gets worse every single year and noted her kids haven't set foot in park for 5 years. Stated she has seen officers drive around but rarely feet on the ground in Rutland.

**Answer:** Cpl Kube noted he frequents park and problems are not unique to that park. He mentioned there is increased police presence where youth congregate including in parks.

**Colleen (posed a question to the audience):** There is increased enforcement but is there anything other than police presence that would improve people's feeling of safety?

**Audience:** Suggested Full time bylaw to rotate through parks... An Individual who walks through Ben Lee around 6am and feels safe but asked for better lighting. (Other suggestions from the audience were:) Landscaping, Park Rangers, Cardboard officers put in various places. Opportunities for youth engagement in the community such as in the past helping to build a playground or skate park.

**Individual in Audience** thanked Colleen and Michael for coming and speaking to us. Asked if there were numbers of how many homeless people specific for Rutland area? (Answer not captured.)

**Corporal Kube** noted there are designated members who police in Rutland and many like and request to work up here. He noted they will monitor new Ministry Social Service (MSDPR) office and will allocate resources to Rutland if needed.

Noted many areas of community are impacted by social disorder. Bandaid superficial aid are not going to fix what the deeper issues are.

**19 year old stated he and his peers feel there is no hope, no future.** Society needs to be pro-active rather than enabling. **He asked:** What are pro-active things we can do to help these individuals succeed and be contributing members of society? **Answer:** Mental Health Act and it's limitation where people can't be forced to get well.

**Gwen Question:** made note that laws or lack thereof – Questioned the laws for drug dealers and wanted to know how they, police are approaching/dealing with the drug dealers? Gwen noted that she feels safe walking but there are vehicles parked in the school parking lot at night and sees activities and deals happening. Corporal Kube noted laws still target drug dealers and the analysis department helps them allocate resources to deal with arresting dealers.

Gwen suggested targeting drug dealers at schools should be a priority. Cpl Kube explained RCMP collect evidence which gets sent to a prosecution office before charges would be presented /made.

**Chris Question:** He organizes Community Clean Ups and if individuals are camping in a park, would they be asked to leave if reported? **Answer:** Call Bylaw – people are not allowed to shelter overnight in Parks.

**Individual Question:** asked are there case file numbers for Bylaws?

– **Colleen Answered:** City has a service request system and a service request number is assigned to an issue (similar to what the RCMP use). (Person making the bylaw request can ask for that number if it isn't given to them.)

Kube noted analysts review RCMP reports – This is what is used to create allocation of RCMP resources.

Colleen Cornock: There is now one 8 bed Complex Care unit in Kelowna at an undisclosed location not in Rutland. More units in the future.

What can community do? (Join) Strong Neighborhoods , Block Connectors, etc.

Auxiliary RCMP will be here Next Summer.

**19 year old asked:** – Is there any possibility for repeat offenders being forced to have psych evaluations?

**Cpl Kube Answered:** Mental Health standpoint can only force treatment/mental health evaluation if danger to themselves or others. Repeat offenders do not necessarily have mental health problems being looked at by provincial and federal government re: bail reform and revolving door.

Comments from Cpl Kube and Colleen Cornock:

**Report Crime and Bylaw infractions** - 'Cant go if we dont know'

**Question:** Does Kelowna still had Citizens on Patrol?

**Answer:** Dissolved last year concerns around safety of the volunteer citizen on Patrol, also stopped the use of vehicles with RCMP Decals after the shootings in NS.

**Comment:** Violent and repeat offenders (are those who will be affected by the BC Province's new laws around bail and incarceration).

**Question:** Have RCMP seen an uptick in the number of prolific offenders carrying weapons and/or engaging violent behaviors?

**Answer:** Corporal Michael Kube Yes 100%

**Question:** What about a citizen using self defense in protecting their property?)

**Answer:** it's not in anyone's best interest to put themselves in a position where they may have to defend themselves over property.No definitive line in the sand in terms of citizen using 'self defense', citizen would have to meet the same criteria as the RCMP. Did they use undue force, what weapon used, were they truly under threat, etc.