

## **Annex 1: Moving Forward: Implementation of Sooke Compassionate Action Plan**

### **Foreword**

The short- and long-term actions proposed the five areas of focus in the Sooke Compassionate Action Plan (CAP) can only be taken through the concerted, collaborative efforts of individuals, service groups and agencies in the community. There must be a consensus among these players as to what needs to be done.

A workshop was held on the afternoon March 2, 2019 at the Sooke Baptist Church to address how best to realize the Sooke CAP.

Rick Eby, Pastor of the Sooke Baptist Church, welcomed and thanked the 24 workshop participants (list of names attached). T'Sou-ke Elder Shirley Alphonse gave an opening blessing on the value of compassion and love in helping others. District of Sooke Mayor Maja Tait described the many initiatives being undertaken by the Primary Health Services Working Group which she chairs.

### **Workshop Findings and Conclusions**

1. It was agreed from the outset of the workshop that the five areas of focus in the Sooke CAP are closely linked. These areas of focus are:
  - a. Homelessness
  - b. Affordability
  - c. Social Isolation
  - d. Inadequate Health Service
  - e. Need for Improved Communication/Awareness/Collaboration
  
2. One of the participants passionately called attention to Sooke residents who are “falling between the cracks” because their basic human needs for shelter, nutritious food and meaningful social contact are currently not being met. Homelessness, for example, often arises from an inability to rent “affordable” units which is in turn linked to the social isolation arising from mental illness and/or drug and alcohol addiction. Health services are not adequate to provide effective treatment. One woman in her 50s doubted the value of a Compassionate Action Plan since even short-term actions under the plan do not

meet her basic need for shelter NOW. Many others, however, saw the benefits of the CAP provided it focuses on realistic ambitions and the pathways to achieve these goals.

3. A comprehensive, collaborative approach across service groups, agencies and concerned individuals is needed to deal with the whole person at risk and to avoid duplication of limited human and financial resources. The fifth area of focus in the Sooke CAP, the need for better communication, awareness, and collaboration, supports development of this comprehensive approach.
4. The awareness component of the fifth area of focus in the Sooke CAP also pertains to the need for recognition of the plight of its less fortunate members by the wider community. Sooke is a good place to live for most but not all of its residents. It is, in some measure, a fragmented community. A revealing statistic is that the average total household income in the District Municipality of Sooke in 2015 was \$81,455 according to the Canada Census. Sooke is no longer a place to find cheap accommodation for single parents, seniors on fixed incomes or the homeless. The importance of the Sooke Food Bank and below market/subsidized housing units to these marginalized residents cannot be overstated. The high costs of land acquisition, labour and materials remain a barrier to further construction of affordable units.
5. Although these challenges exist, much good work is underway in Sooke. It was recognized on March 2<sup>nd</sup> that progress has been made under certain areas of focus since the October 27, 2018 workshop which led to development of the Sooke CAP. Indications of this progress are:
  - a. the creation of the Sooke Extreme Weather Shelter in February at the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area Administration Building on Otter Point Road. It provided a warm, secure space for the local homeless during the particularly harsh winter conditions that month. The facility was created through the compassionate efforts of Our Place, the Sooke Shelter Society and Mike Hicks, Regional Director for the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area.

- b. the support which Mayor Tait and the Primary Health Services Working Group has secured from the Government of BC and local medical practitioners for expansion of health services in Sooke. The recent hiring of a Community Paramedic for the District of Sooke is already benefitting residents.
  - c. the recent opening of the Knox Vision Society's affordable housing complex (the Knox Centre) with 42 units at Church Road and Wadams Way, with approvals for additional such projects.
  - d. the announcement by BC Housing of 244 units of genuinely affordable housing in the Throup and Drennan Road areas for a broad range of income levels. These include 49 units at the BC Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction's shelter rate (\$375 per person) along with 76 "affordable units" and 109 units at "near-market" rental rates.
6. In terms of improved communications and awareness, participants identified the need for a full-time "navigator" who could serve as a point person and clearing house for information about social services and helping organizations in the Sooke region. It was felt that the Sooke Region Community Health Network (formerly Sooke Region CHI) was the natural home base for such a person, who would be available by phone, online and in person to help Sooke residents "navigate" their way through the options. This person would also feed updated information about Sooke region services to the well advertised BC 211 phone hotline service run by the United Way. The trick will be to source and secure stable long-term funding for this position in an era when the Province of BC has either eliminated these kinds of programs or downloaded responsibility for them to citizens and/or municipal governments.
7. Participants were not asked to commit to short- or long-term actions. The Sooke CAP, if endorsed by the District of Sooke Council and recognized by the Charter for Compassion International, will be a call to action by the community.

## **Next Steps**

1. Presentation of the Sooke CAP, including the finalized Annex, to the District of Sooke Council in late April or early May. The Council's endorsement will be requested on that occasion, as well as consideration for inclusion of the plan in an appendix to the new Official Community Plan for the District of Sooke.
2. Submission of the Sooke CAP, if endorsed by Council, to Charter for Compassion International in May.
3. Recognition of Sooke as a Compassionate Community by Charter for Compassion International in May or June.
4. Community engagement in the compassionate actions under the Sooke CAP with regular reports on implementation of the plan.

## **Attendees : Sooke Compassionate Action Plan Implementation Workshop**

### **Sooke Baptist Church, Saturday, March 2, 2019, 2:00-4:00 pm**

Shirley Alphonse

Jeff Bateman

Don Brown

Doug Cook

Rick Eby

Ken Gorel

Les Haddad

P.G.K. Hamilton

Bruce Hegerat

Liz Johnson

Pauline Johnson

Sifu Koshin-Moonfist

Sue Lidster

Nikki Logins

Elaine McMath

Maxine Medhurst

Brenda Parkinson

Maddison Prinn

Sharon Sterling

Maja Tait

Betty Tully

Jen Wilde

Amelie(?) Wilde

Mark Ziegler