

**TOWN OF OKOTOKS
UNADOPTED MINUTES
FOR THE UNITED WAY/OKOTOKS PARTNERSHIP COMMUNITY INVESTMENT
SUB-COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING
HELD TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2025
IN THE OKOTOKS MUNICIPAL CENTRE COUNCIL CHAMBER**

COMMITTEE Valeria Rusnak, Chair
MEMBERS PRESENT Councillor Hallmark
Claire Baek
Michael Cook
Meg Meints
Dick Nichols
Jakki Smolcic

CALGARY UNITED Vice President, Community Impact & Partnerships Susan Brooke
WAY STAFF PRESENT

STAFF PRESENT Community & Social Development Team Leader Sian Anderson
Community Wellness Specialist Magan Braun
Community & Social Development Administrator Nikki Hamilton
Community & Social Development Administrator Bethany Pizani

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Valeria Rusnak called the meeting to order at 8:56 a.m. and provided a traditional land acknowledgement.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MOTION: By M. Cook that the agenda for the April 29, 2025 United Way/Okotoks Partnership Community Investment Sub-Committee Meeting be adopted as presented.

Carried Unanimously

3. PRESENTATIONS

3.1 Christ the Redeemer Catholic Separate Schools - The Connections Program

Stephanie Wieler, Grant Writer and Aileen Taylor, Coordinator of Mental Health Services, presented on the organization's 2025 funding request of \$10,000.00.

The core elements of the Connections Program are therapeutic in-school suspensions, school connectedness, restorative practices, and mentoring. The primary goals of the Connections Program are to reduce truancy, keep students in school through to graduation, increase student-school and student-community connection and engagement, and provide students with an adult mentor. United Way funding will support the ongoing delivery of the Connections Program in Okotoks.

3.2 Dr. Morris Gibson (DMG) Fundraising Committee - Sensory Room

Sarah Clarke, DMG Principal, Jenna Smith, Treasurer, Rachelle Spackman, Occupational Therapist, and Ashley Coolen, Parent Council Representative, presented on the organization's 2025 funding request of \$5,000.00.

The sensory room aims to support students with sensory processing challenges, anxiety, or difficulty with self-regulation in traditional classroom settings. Its primary goal is to enhance emotional well-being and foster self-regulation skills, thereby supporting students' academic success. The room also serves as a valuable resource for teachers, helping manage sensory overload, reduce classroom disruptions, and promote a more inclusive learning environment. United Way funding will support the purchase of specialized furniture and equipment.

3.3 Foothills Advocacy in Motion (FAIM) - Seasonal Yard Pros

Jenn Seinen, Fundraising Coordinator, and Gerry McCallum, Executive Director, presented on the organization's 2025 funding request of \$7,000.00.

The Seasonal Yard Pros program supports adults with disabilities in finding meaningful employment in Okotoks. By participating in a landscaping initiative, individuals gain not only job experience but also a sense of purpose, independence, and belonging. The goal of the program is to promote mental and physical well-being, build responsibility, and encourages social inclusion and community engagement. Services will be advertised to both individuals and local businesses to foster broad community involvement. United Way funding will support the purchase of equipment and materials necessary for program delivery.

3.4 Foothills School Division (Fiduciary Lead); Foothills Community Coalition - Integrated Youth Hub Furniture

Lori Anne Schultz, Interim Director, presented on the organization's 2025 funding request of \$14,547.00.

The Integrated Youth Hub is a community-led initiative supporting youth ages 11–25 and their families in Okotoks and the Foothills. It will offer access to mental health care, addiction support, family programs, peer mentorship, and education/employment resources in a safe, inclusive space. The goal of the Integrated Youth Hub is to help reduce barriers rural youth face, improve access to early support, and promote well-being and connection during the transition to adulthood. United Way funding will support the purchase of furniture for the Integrated Youth Hub.

Break at 10:09 a.m. Reconvene at 10:20 a.m.

3.5 Foothills School Division - Family School Liaison Counsellors (FSLC)

Lindsay Boucher, Counselling Coordinator, presented on the organization's 2025 funding request of \$10,000.00.

The FSLC program provides support to meet the needs of individuals, schools, and families to address psychosocial, emotional, and behavioural concerns. Their program's goal is to help students and families develop and strengthen positive coping skills to deal with disruptive, stressful or challenging events, through collaborative work with schools and community agencies. United Way funding will support professional development addressing school refusal, technology misuse and abuse, and supporting grief and loss.

3.6 Foothills School Division - Outreach Services - Cameron Crossing School

Rob Gallacher, Vice Principal, presented the organization's 2025 request of \$10,000.00.

Cameron Crossing School supports at-risk learners in grades 7-12 who are not successful in a traditional school setting due to a variety of reasons such as trauma, anxiety, addictions, and economic status. These students are at risk of dropping out and face both real and perceived barriers to success in school and in life. The program's goal is to foster a sense of belonging and connection, helping students to feel like valued and productive members of their community. By providing tailored support and community engagement opportunities, Cameron Crossing helps students achieve success in high school and beyond. United Way funding will support program fees, transportation costs, cultural experiences, volunteer opportunities, and mentorship opportunities.

3.7 Inclusion Foothills - Family Support Program

Heather Pfiel, President; Orvella Small, Executive Director; and Vanessa McKenzie, Incoming Executive Director, presented on the organization's 2025 funding request of \$18,000.00.

Inclusion Foothills Association serves individuals of all ages with pan-disabilities and their families in Okotoks and surrounding area. They prioritize creating a safe, non-judgmental space for all in offering support, education, and information. Through one-to-one planning, support groups, access to resources, and educational opportunities, the program fosters a sense of belonging and empowerment, helping all individuals feel valued, included, and supported to thrive. United Way funding will support core program expenses, including salaries, facility rental, and program supplies.

3.8 KidSport Okotoks - Physical Activity Registration Support

Kyle Jones, Chair, presented on the organization's 2025 funding request of \$5,000.00.

KidSport helps to strengthen communities across Canada by supporting children who need financial assistance with sport registration fees. The program's goal is to promote children's social, mental, and physical wellbeing. Their program is focused on increasing children's success in school, cultivating leaders, creating safer communities, igniting inclusivity, fueling healthy habits, and improving mental health. United Way funding will be used to support youth physical activity registration fees in Okotoks.

Break at 11:15 a.m. Reconvene at 11:24 a.m.

3.9 Okotoks Family Resource Centre (OFRC) – Okotoks Family Resource Centre

Sherri Mullen, Family Resource Centre Specialist, presented the organization's 2025 funding request of \$15,000.00.

The Okotoks Family Resource Centre (OFRC) provides information, support, and programming for people in the community including seniors, people at risk of housing instability, those experiencing mental health difficulties, and individuals and families struggling with immediate and long-term financial difficulties. The program aims to increase community knowledge of available resources, recognize volunteer's contributions, support seniors in maintaining independence, and provide short-term financial assistance while connecting individuals to long-term financial stability. United Way funding will support program expenses, including materials, equipment, salaries, and volunteer recognition.

3.10 Okotoks Food bank Association - Food Literacy Framework

Bente Yanato, Executive Director, and Carla Hick, Food Consultant, presented on the organization's 2025 funding request of \$7,750.00.

The Food Literacy Framework is designed to help clients build practical skills in feeding themselves and their families, with a focus on cooking, budgeting, and meal prep. The program's goal is to enhance food literacy, promote healthy and affordable eating, reduce food waste, and foster community engagement to improve food security and self-sufficiency. United Way funding will be used to support a Food Literacy Consultant, purchase ingredients and supplies, and develop the Food Literacy Framework.

3.11 Okotoks Public Library – Literacy Launch Kits

Sarah Gillie, Director, and Sarah Lantry, Assistant Director, presented on the organization's 2025 funding request of \$12,000.00.

The Literacy Launch Kits project supports adult English language learners, newcomers, refugees, immigrants literacy levels by providing accessible, practical learning resources. The goal is to help users build confidence, improve employability, and increase community involvement through kits that include books, instructional materials and interactive tools such as games and activities. United Way funding will support the purchase of supplies and resources to create the Literacy Launch Kits.

3.12 Organization for the Prevention of Violence - Evolve Program Awareness Campaign

Mike King, Deputy Executive Director, and Morgan Parker, Caseworker, presented on the organization's 2025 funding request of \$2,000.00.

The Evolve Program provides, trauma-informed, relationship-based support to individuals in Alberta involved in hate or extremist beliefs, as well as their families. The program's goal is to help participants disengage from harmful ideologies and offer an alternative path to rehabilitation, reducing the need for criminal justice involvement. Delivered by professionals including social workers, mental health experts, an Islamic scholar, and former extremists, the program offers personalized support such as counseling, information literacy, crisis management, and mentorship. The program also uses a mobile model to reach rural and remote communities, offering in-person and digital support to meet participants' needs. United Way funding will be used to support digital advertising, materials and supplies, and staffing costs for awareness campaigns.

Break at 12:22 p.m. Reconvene at 12:32 p.m.

3.13 Rowan House Society - Preventative Education Program

Linette Soldan, Executive Director, presented on the organization's 2025 funding request of \$7,000.00.

Rowan House Society is dedicated to aiding individuals and families confronting domestic violence and abuse, providing an array of services while prioritizing safety and inclusivity. The program's goal is to foster a resilient community, empower individuals, and create meaningful connections. United Way funding will be used to support staff costs, volunteer training, volunteer appreciation, supplies, and other program expenses.

3.14 Sheep River Health Trust - School Meal Program

Andrea Mitchell, Executive director, presented on the organization's 2025 funding request of \$12,000.00.

The School Meal Program ensures all students have access to nutritious meals, supporting academic success, emotional well-being, and overall development. The program is funded through the Sheep River Health Trust and delivered by school staff and parent volunteers, helping to build a healthier, more resilient community. United Way funding will support provision of meals to eight schools in Okotoks.

3.15 Solace Grief Support Society - Individual Counselling

Shirley Crawford, President, presented on the organization's 2025 funding request of \$10,440.00.

Solace Grief Support Society provides online and in-person grief counselling and support to the residents of Okotoks, High River, and the surrounding area. The program's goal is to build individual resilience by offering professional guided sessions where participants can process emotions and learn healthy coping skills in a safe, supportive environment. United Way funding will support staffing costs.

4. CLOSED SESSION

MOTION: By Councillor Hallmark that the meeting go into Closed Session as the matters to be discussed during this portion of the meeting are within one of the exceptions to disclosure in Division 2 of Part I of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act.) at 1:15pm.

Carried Unanimously

4.1 Funding Discussion (FOIP s. 23(1) and 24(1) (g))

In Attendance

Committee Members: Valeria Rusnak, Councillor Hallmark, Claire Baek, Michael Cook, Meg Meints, Dick Nichols, Jakki Smolic.

Vice President, Community Impact & Partnerships, Susan Brooke

Community & Social Development Team Leader Sian Anderson

Community Wellness Specialist Magan Braun

Community and Social Development Administrator Nikki Hamilton

Community and Social Development Administrator Bethany Pizani

MOTION: By M. Cook that the meeting come out of Closed Session at 3:10 p.m.

Carried Unanimously

5. MOTION(S) ARISING FROM CLOSED SESSION

5.1 Christ the Redeemer Catholic Separate Schools - The Connections Program

MOTION: By M. Meints that Christ the Redeemer Catholic Separate Schools - The Connections Program be funded \$7,500.00.

Carried Unanimously

5.2 Dr. Morris Gibson (DMG) Fundraising Committee - Sensory Room

MOTION: By D. Nichols that Dr. Morris Gibson Fundraising Committee - Sensory Room be funded \$4,000.00.

Carried Unanimously

5.3 Foothills Advocacy in Motion Society (FAIM) - Seasonal Yard Pros

MOTION: By Councillor Hallmark that Foothills Advocacy in Motion Society - Seasonal Yard Pros be funded \$7,000.00.

Carried Unanimously

5.4 Foothills School Division (Fiduciary Lead); Foothills Community Coalition - Integrated Youth Hub Furniture

MOTION: By M. Cook that Foothills School Division (Fiduciary Lead); Foothills Community Coalition - Integrated Youth Hub Furniture be funded \$10,000.00.

Carried Unanimously

5.5 Foothills School Division - Family School Liaison Counsellors

MOTION: By J. Smolic that Foothills School Division - Family School Liaison Counsellors not be funded.

Carried Unanimously

5.6 Foothills School Division - Outreach Services - Cameron Crossing School

MOTION: By C. Baek that Foothills School Division - Outreach Services - Cameron Crossing School be funded \$10,000.00.

Carried Unanimously

5.7 Inclusion Foothills - Family Support Program

MOTION: By M. Cook that Inclusion Foothills - Family Support Program be funded \$12,500.00.

Carried Unanimously

5.8 KidSport Okotoks - Physical Activity Registration Support

MOTION: By M. Meints that KidSport Okotoks - Physical Activity Registration Support not be funded.

Carried Unanimously

5.9 Okotoks Family Resource Centre (OFRC) – Okotoks Family Resource Centre

MOTION: By D. Nichols that Okotoks Family Resource Centre (OFRC) be funded \$15,000.00.

Carried Unanimously

5.10 Okotoks Food Bank Association - Food Literacy Framework

MOTION: By C. Baek that Okotoks Food Bank Association - Food Literacy Framework not be funded.

Carried Unanimously

5.11 Okotoks Public Library - Literacy Launch Kits

MOTION: By Councillor Hallmark that Okotoks Public Library - Literacy Launch Kits be funded \$12,000.00.

Carried Unanimously

5.12 Organization for the Prevention of Violence - Evolve Program Awareness Campaign

MOTION: By M. Cook that Organization for the Prevention of Violence - Evolve Program Awareness Campaign not be funded.

Carried Unanimously

5.13 Rowan House Society - Preventative Education Program

MOTION: By J. Smolic that Rowan House Society - Preventative Education Program be funded \$7,000.00.

Carried Unanimously

5.14 Sheep River Health Trust - School Meal Program

MOTION: By M. Meints that Sheep River Health Trust - School Meal Program not be funded.

Carried Unanimously

5.15 Solace Grief Support Society - Individual Counselling

MOTION: By D. Nichols that Solace Grief Support Society - Individual Counselling be funded \$5,000.00.

Carried Unanimously

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: By C. Baek that the April 29, 2025 United Way/Okotoks Partnership Committee Investment Sub-Committee Meeting adjourn at 3:17 p.m.

Carried Unanimously