



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

Staff Report

To: Council

File No.: 2380-20

From: Director of Development Services

Date: July 31, 2024

Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services

Subject: Report Back on Temporary Shelter, Washrooms and Storage

PURPOSE: To provide Council with an update regarding temporary shelter, washrooms, and storage and to seek Council's approval to advance the work necessary to locate temporary washrooms and storage adjacent to the Connect Centre.

BACKGROUND:

Over the past year, Council has directed staff to proceed with work related to investigating options and reporting back on considerations related to temporary shelter, washrooms, and storage.

At the October 25, 2023 Council meeting, the following resolution was adopted:

THAT Council direct staff to explore the placement of a temporary washroom facility adjacent to the Connect Centre and report back to Council with recommendation.

At the March 13, 2024 Council meeting, Council made the following rise and report resolutions:

- 1) *THAT Council direct staff to write to the Minister of Housing requesting that the City of Courtenay be identified as a priority community for Encampment & Homelessness Response: HEART & HEARTH program funding due to the urgent need for shelter space and supportive housing, and*

THAT Council rise and report this resolution at the February 28, 2024 Council meeting.

- 2) *THAT Council direct staff to write to the Minister of Housing requesting that the City of Courtenay be identified as a priority community for Encampment & Homelessness Response: HEART & HEARTH program funding due to the urgent need for shelter space and supportive housing, and*

THAT Council rise and report this resolution at the February 28, 2024 Council meeting.

At the March 13, 2024 Council meeting, the following resolution was also adopted:

THAT Council direct staff to bring back a report at the April 10th, 2024 Council Meeting, outlining a range of temporary sheltering options including but not limited to: managed encampments, temporary modular housing and other options identified by staff; and

THAT the report include preliminary consideration of the following details for each option presented:

- *Anticipated operational impact*
- *Budget estimates*
- *Potential number of individuals supported*
- *Potential partnerships for the provision of services, and*
- *Any other impacts or considerations.*

On March 28, 2024, BC Housing announced the purchase of 925 Braidwood. BC Housing shared that the land purchase will be used to facilitate the development of permanent, purpose-built supportive housing and temporary shelter, including potential Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelter beds. BC Housing has now initiated community engagement on their proposed use of the site.

The staff report “Update on Temporary Shelter Housing Options”¹ was presented to Council on April 10, 2024 and outlined the considerations and implications of various temporary shelter options as well as the opportunity for the City to work with BC Housing and the Ministry of Housing to identify opportunities to work together on addressing the significant gaps in shelter and services in the Comox Valley and Courtenay. The report identified that all options for temporary shelter require significant capital and operating funding, as well as the identification of suitable land and or locations for service provision.

At the April 10, 2024 Council meeting, the following resolution was adopted in response to the staff report:

THAT Council direct staff to include storage options for the belongings of unhoused individuals in the next update on temporary housing.

On May 8, 2024 Council received a letter from the Ministry of Housing in response to the City’s request to be identified as a priority community for Encampment and Homelessness Response HEART and HEARTH program funding. The letter identified that the Province is looking to prioritize communities with complex encampment challenges, site prospects, and partnership opportunities and acknowledged the City’s commitment to identifying land and opportunities for shelter and housing.

DISCUSSION:

Staff have been actively working on investigating and responding to the aforementioned Council resolutions since last fall. This work has included preliminary cost estimates and options considerations, research with other municipalities, relationship building with key partners such as BC Housing, as well as pursuing funding strategies with the Province.

The complexity related to building and fire code, zoning, and funding requirements has delayed the progression of this work without dedicated staff. As such, the City has engaged M’akola Development Services (M’akola) to provide the resources necessary to carry forward this work into feasibility and options analysis, and implementation pending Council direction.

Temporary Washrooms and Storage

Staff have been having ongoing dialogue with BC Housing and the Comox Valley Transition Society (CVTS) regarding the need for additional and temporary washrooms for Connect. Recently, BC Housing has offered the City a washroom trailer for one dollar (\$1.00) to respond to this need. Concurrently, BC Housing has agreed to provide CVTS with the necessary funding for CVTS to add an additional temporary facility to provide

¹ [Update on Temporary Shelter Housing Options \(escribemeetings.com\)](https://www.escribemeetings.com)

a dedicated staff washroom and meeting space necessary to address operational and staff requirements at Connect. Staff and CTVS are also in discussions with BC Housing to request the provision of operating funding towards the temporary washroom trailer costs within the CVTS and BC Housing operating agreement for Connect.

If the City agrees to accept the temporary washroom trailer, the City would also be responsible for connecting the trailer to the necessary infrastructure or services, as well as completing any required construction works to support the facility (such as stairs and decking). Staff estimate the costs to be up to \$150,000. As such, staff are seeking Council's direction to proceed with accepting the trailer and authorizing staff to expend up to \$150,000 to facilitate the implementation of the washroom trailer on a temporary basis until a permanent shelter is constructed.

The City currently has a lease agreement with CVTS for the operation of Connect, including a small outside area in the parking lot. In order to facilitate the implementation of temporary washroom and staff trailers, as well as storage, an expansion to the leased area would be necessary and require an amendment to the lease.

Proposed Work

Based on preliminary work and discussions with M'akola, as well as the recent announcement from BC Housing regarding 925 Braidwood, staff are recommending the following approach:

- Phase 1: Temporary Washrooms & Storage at Connect Centre
 - Staff recommend prioritizing this phase to focus on implementation of the washroom trailer and storage on city lands adjacent to the Connect Centre until a permanent shelter is constructed.
 - The work would include identifying costs, operational implications, infrastructure requirements, and consultation with relevant parties (BC Housing and CVTS) and leading the work required for implementation of the trailers and storage facilities.
 - This approach would not include assessing alternative locations or strategies to the expansion of washroom facilities in Courtenay and would only allow for the informing of interested parties such as the DCBIA and property neighbours.
 - Should Council want further consultation or engagement with interested parties, this would add significant time to the process and delay implementation.
 - To proceed with this option, staff are seeking Council direction:
 - To accept the washroom facility from BC Housing for \$1.00 and to locate it on city lands adjacent to Connect.
 - To amend the lease agreement with CVTS to expand their current lease area to include the land necessary to locate temporary washroom trailers and storage.
 - To allocate up to \$150,000 towards installation of the temporary washroom trailer and storage solutions including infrastructure connections and or servicing, and construction elements such as stairs, decking, and fencing.
 - 1, Section 1.1.1.1
 - Given the emergency situation to provide critical community services and shelter, locating the temporary trailers falls under the BC Building Code Division, A, Part 1, 1.1.1.1. (2) (f) iv emergency facilities.
- Phase 2: Temporary Shelter Options Analysis
 - As Phase 1 is being implemented, M'akola will also assist in identifying possible temporary shelter options, including locations.

- Staff will need to report back to Council with recommended locations including costs and operational implications, infrastructure requirements, funding strategies, and consultation with relevant parties.
- Should Council support a specific location, staff would then proceed with exploring and confirming partnership opportunities.

Funding Strategies & Implications

In previous reports to Council staff have provided high level estimates of both operational and capital costs likely required to bring solutions for temporary shelter and washrooms to fruition. These estimated costs are summarized below:

- Operating costs for temporary washrooms (supervised 12 hours per day): \$15,000 to \$20,000 per month or \$185,000 to \$240,000 per year.²
- Infrastructure costs for temporary washrooms:
 - Rental and servicing of temporary trailers: \$15,000 to \$20,000 per month (operating)³
 - Infrastructure connections for more permanent facilities: \$50,000 to \$100,000 (capital)⁴
- Temporary shelter options:⁵
 - Tiny Shelters on vacant land: annual operating costs of approximately \$850,000 plus capital costs of approximately \$965,000 plus connection fees (for 30 units)
 - Managed encampments: \$100,000 per month for direct costs plus in-kind costs associated with by-law, police, fire, and staff time. Remediation costs range from \$500,000 to \$750,000 (capital).

Financial implications for storage solutions have not yet been estimated and will form part of M'akola's work and staff will report back to Council if there are funding implications. However, staff have engaged with other municipalities who have implemented storage processes and will look to build off those programs.

Staff continue to advocate to BC Housing for additional operating funding to support the operations of the temporary washroom trailer at Connect. Staff expect that once the City has a clear path forward and has articulated its commitment to the above items (i.e. in the form of financial or land contributions) discussions regarding remaining funding gaps will be met with greater success.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

OCP, 2022

Affordable Housing

- AH 13: Identify undeveloped and underdeveloped municipal sites for future affordable housing projects with emphasis on providing a mix of tenures including supportive housing.
- AH 18: Advocate for senior government funding for affordable housing projects and initiatives.

Social Infrastructure

- SI 6: Identify an appropriate role for the City in the delivery of social infrastructure in relation to other organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions that provide services for equity-priority groups.

² [Downtown Public Washroom – Urbaloo 24 Hour Pilot Update \(escribemeetings.com\)](#)

³ Ibid.

⁴ [685 Cliffe Avenue – Lease Renewal and Temporary Washroom Consideration \(escribemeetings.com\)](#)

⁵ [Update on Temporary Shelter Housing Options \(escribemeetings.com\)](#)

- SI 8: Continue to support regional partners on program administration and delivery for homelessness, poverty prevention, mental health, addiction, and overdose prevention programs.
- SI 16: Provide sufficient, high-quality public spaces that promote social connectedness. Include amenities to support all ages and abilities such as public washrooms, seating areas, and drinking fountains.
- SI 17: Develop a strategy to address community need for public washrooms, including hand washing stations and access to secure potable water.
- SI 21: Support volunteers, organizations, and other social assets to continue undertaking their work within the community.

Land Use Discussion

The city owned lands that Connect is currently located on at 685 Cliffe Avenue and the adjoining two lots at 665 and 645 Cliffe Avenue which are proposed to be used for the temporary trailers, are designated Downtown in the Official Community Plan (OCP) which permits supportive and transitional housing. The lands are zoned C1 which permits community service, day care, facilities for adults with disabilities and medical clinic but does not permit shelter. As such Council had previously passed a resolution to make a policy decision not to enforce the zoning bylaw on the land that currently Connect is operating on and will have to extend this to the other two City owned lots at 665 and 645 Cliffe Avenue in recognition of the 2016 Public Health Emergency as declared in response to the overdose crisis by the Provincial Health Officer to consider the temporary provision and expansion of emergency services and facilities.

The BC Building Code recognizes Emergency facilities under Division A, Part 1, 1.1.1.1. (2) (f) iv, The Building code does not apply with the permission of the authority have jurisdiction (Council and Building Inspector), for temporary buildings including emergency facilities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The estimated budget of retaining M'Akola Development Services for this work is \$10,000 and will be sourced from Development Services community and sustainability professional services budget line.

Staff are recommending that Council authorize the expenditure of up to \$150,000 from 2023 surplus to support the infrastructure and construction works necessary to locate temporary washroom trailers and storage solutions adjacent to Connect.

Staff will continue to request operational funding support from BC Housing for the provision of temporary washrooms and recommend that Council direct staff to pursue additional funding sources for any remaining operating gaps, including requesting funds from the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) via function 451 as well as the Town of Comox who are not participants in that function. Any further cost implications for implementation of temporary shelter, washroom, and storage programs would come back to Council at a future date for Council's consideration.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

Development Services and Recreation, Culture, and Community Services are working collaboratively to progress the work outlined in this report. Without dedicated staff resources, even with the assistance of M'akola, other work priorities will be adjusted to focus on this priority.

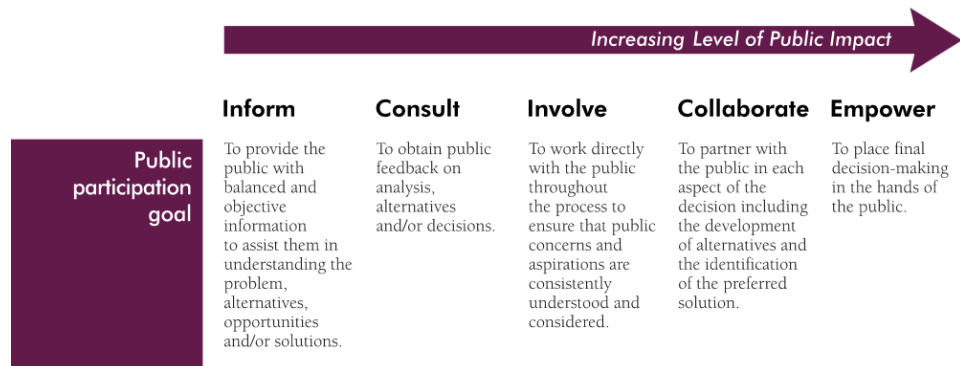
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Social Infrastructure - Continue working with community agencies to deliver day services. Explore role in the provision of social support services, including future of Connect Centre.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Staff would inform the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



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OPTIONS:

1. THAT Council, in recognition of the 2016 Public Health Emergency as declared in response to the overdose crisis by the Provincial Health Officer, consider the temporary provision and expansion of emergency services; and,

THAT Council exercise their authority and make a policy decision to not enforce the City of Courtenay Zoning Bylaw No 2500, 2007 to permit day and overnight services for unhoused and other marginalized community members, including but not limited to: overnight sheltering, washrooms, personal belonging storage, administrative support, health and housing support services, distribution of survival materials/food/supplies, and other related services to the satisfaction of the Building Inspector and Fire Chief; and,

THAT Council delegate authority to the Director of Recreation, Culture and Community Services, to negotiate amendments to the lease agreement between the City of Courtenay and the Comox Valley Transition Society, for the property having a legal description of PID: 006-102-930, Lot 3, Section 61 Comox District Plan VIP3817, (685 Cliffe Avenue – Connect Center), including the expansion of the leased area to include the property having the legal description of PID:005-101-018, Lot 1, Plan VIP3817, Section 661, Comox Land District (665 Cliffe Avenue – adjacent parking lot) for the purposes of permitting the following temporary uses: client belonging storage, additional client washrooms, additional staff washrooms, additional administrative work space; and,

THAT Council approve the purchase of a washroom trailer from BC Housing for \$1; and,

THAT Council allocate up to \$150,000 from the 2023 surplus towards the installation of the temporary washroom trailer and storage solutions; and,

THAT Council direct staff to request operating funding contributions for the temporary washroom and/or storage facility from: BC Housing, Comox Valley Regional District (Function 451), Town of

Comox, and other appropriate funders.

2. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

Prepared by: Susie Saunders, Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services
Marianne Wade, Director of Development Services

Concurrence: Kate O'Connell, Director of Corporate Services, Acting City Manager (CAO)
Geoff Garbutt, M.Pl., MCIP, RPP, City Manager (CAO)