

THE CORPORATION OF THE
CITY OF WHITE ROCK
CORPORATE REPORT



DATE: April 28, 2025

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Jim Gordon P.Eng., Director, Engineering and Municipal Operations

SUBJECT: Beach Wheelchairs Access and Storage

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council:

1. Approve six months storage of beach wheelchairs at the utility room at Memorial Park washroom subject to an organization stepping forward to manage all aspects of a beach wheelchair program.
 2. Directs staff to work with the Self Advocates of Semiahmoo (SAS) to reach out to find an organization willing to manage a beach wheelchair program.
-

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores access options for specialty “beach wheelchairs” that would enable persons with mobility challenges to travel down from the Promenade onto the sandy areas of the beach.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

Motion # & Meeting Date	Motion Details
2019-300 July 22, 2019	<p>WHEREAS the City of White Rock is a city that values inclusion and recognizes the importance of inclusive safe access to the White Rock tidal flats;</p> <p>THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council directs staff to engage and consult with Semiahmoo First Nation to identify areas for the creation of safe inclusive access points at east, west, and the White Rock areas of the beach and tidal flats with a timeline for completion in 2020;</p> <p>AND AS SUCH Council directs staff to work with the Self-Advocates of Semiahmoo in the application of grants which may provide financial assistance to realize safe inclusive beach and tidal flats access in White Rock City.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CARRIED</p>

2024 – 421 November 25, 2024	THAT Council direct staff to bring forward a report outlining options for beach wheelchair storage locations, potential types of storage facilities, cost required, as well as outlining options for how this could work from a procedural perspective. CARRIED
---------------------------------	---

INTRODUCTION

Background

The City has six beach access ramps between Bay Street and Ash Street, with a seventh ramp currently being designed at Finlay Street (Appendix A). While these ramps offer benefits to many, individuals using conventional wheelchairs face challenges progressing beyond the ramp ends and onto the sandy beach areas.

The Self Advocates of Semiahmoo (SAS) own two specialty wheelchairs with wide, inflatable tires that enable access to and along sandy beach areas. Up until 2019, these were stored and accessed from a paddle board shop on Semiahmoo First Nations property east of Finlay Street. This shop is no longer in business.

In July of 2019, after the closure of the paddle board shop, the SAS made a presentation to Council requesting improvements to beach accessibility for people with mobility challenges. One of their requests was for the City to store their beach wheelchairs somewhere along the waterfront so that people wanting to use them could access them.

Follow-Up to Delegation

In 2019, staff initiated First Nations and senior government discussions leading to permitting approval for construction of new access ramps at Bay Street and at Cypress Street. These ramps were constructed to the latest accessibility standards in 2021.

Also in 2021, the City rented a storage container and placed it in the parking lot close to the new Cypress Street access ramp. Two beach wheelchairs were stored in the unit with access to be provided by SAS through a code to a combination lock. This initiative was not actively managed and did not prove to be effective.

DISCUSSION

SAS recently offered by letter dated January 20, 2025 to gift two beach wheelchairs to the City affirming that “the City Council, with counsel of the White Rock Accessibility Committee, is best positioned to determine the most effective and equitable use of the beach wheelchairs.” (Appendix B). SAS concludes this letter by requesting to hear back on acceptance of the donation and the City’s plans for community use.

A viable beach wheelchair program would need a storage location near the beach and a means of managing the booking, issuance, waivers, safety instruction and maintenance of the wheelchairs as outlined in the February 18, 2025 SAS email to staff (Appendix C). Storage Options and Program Management are discussed as follows:

Storage Options

Following, are two storage and issuance options:

1. Storage Container at Cypress Street (\$5K) – As in 2021, a storage container can be rented at Cypress street. The cost is estimated at \$1.2K for the storage container rental and \$3.8K for the revenue loss of two parking spaces. Total cost \$5K. This location is close to the Cypress access ramp.

2. Storage Room at Memorial Park Washrooms (\$1K) – An underutilized storage room at the Memorial Park Washrooms can be freed up for beach wheelchair storage. The cost is estimated at \$1K for minor repurposing of the room and installation of a coded lock. The challenge with this location is that it is a fair distance to the closest beach access at P’Quals, although it is the location preferred by SAS.

It is recommended that the storage location at Memorial Park be provided on a six-month basis should an organization step forward to manage a beach wheelchair program.

Program Management

A scan of beach wheelchair programs shows issuance of equipment by lifeguards, beach rental vendors, and volunteer groups. These methods likely incorporate necessary instruction, waivers, insurance and wheelchair cleaning and maintenance (Appendix D).

Currently, lifeguards and beach rental vendors are not available for the beach wheelchair program. Additionally, City staff are not present at the beach seven (7) days a week to support the program. White Rock beach approaches also present a challenge in that the topography is relatively steep meaning strong, able-bodied support persons would be needed to assist access to the sandy areas of the beach.

Program management would need to be carried out by an organization capable of approximately eight (8) hours coverage seven (7) days per week for six (6) months of the year. This organization would need adequate liability insurance and the necessary capability to provide usage instruction, including safety protocols, as well as the ability to clean and maintain the beach wheelchairs.

Attached as Appendix E is a list of accessible beaches in B.C.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If Council approves, a storage location can be set up at the SAS preferred location of Memorial Park.

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Staff will communicate with SAS and will update the City website and social media as appropriate.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Provision of a beach wheelchair storage location for a volunteer organization to manage a beach wheelchair program is consistent with the Council Strategic Priority of **Community**: We foster a livable city with connected residents enjoying distinctive places and activities.

OPTIONS / RISKS / ALTERNATIVES

The following options are available:

1. Council may decline the wheelchair offer from SAS and stay with the status quo.

CONCLUSION

SAS offered to gift two beach wheelchairs to the City. There is an option to store one of these wheelchairs at Memorial Park as suggested by SAS; however, there is no readily available option for managing a wheelchair issuance program.

It is recommended that Council approve storage of one of the wheelchairs at Memorial Park provided that SAS or another other organization takes on management of the beach wheelchair issuance program.

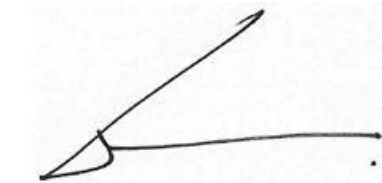
Respectfully submitted,



Jim Gordon, P.Eng.,
Director of Engineering and Municipal Operations

Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer

I concur with the recommendations of this corporate report.



Guillermo Ferrero
Chief Administrative Officer

- Appendix A: Aerial Map of Six Beach Access Ramps Between Bay Street and Ash Street and a 7th Ramp currently being designed at Finlay Street.
- Appendix B: Letter dated January 20, 2025 from Self Advocates of Semiahmoo (SAS) Formal Offer of Two Beach Wheelchairs
- Appendix C: Email from SAS to Staff Outlining past Management of Beach Wheelchair Operations and Suggested Improvements/Requirements
- Appendix D: List of Provisions Used by Other Cities
- Appendix E: List of Accessible Beaches in BC