

THE CORPORATION OF THE
CITY OF WHITE ROCK
CORPORATE REPORT



DATE: January 10, 2022

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Eric Stepura, Director, Recreation and Culture

SUBJECT: Temporary Warming Shelter Options

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive the corporate report dated January 10, 2022, from the Director of Recreation and Culture, titled “Temporary Warming Shelter Options” for Council’s consideration and direction to staff.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This corporate report is in response to Council request that the City provide a warming shelter for local people experiencing homelessness.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

A delegation appeared before Council at the February 22, 2021 Regular Council meeting and delivered a presentation requesting Council to consider providing an emergency daytime warming shelter until the end of March 2021, for those experiencing homelessness. The following motion was adopted by Council:

Motion # & Meeting Date	Motion Details
February 22, 2021 2021-079	That Council directs staff to provide a corporate report regarding information on a daytime warming shelter to accommodate approximately 25-30 people.

At the Regular Council Meeting of March 8, 2021, Council received an on-table corporate report from the Director of Recreation and Culture, titled “Warming Shelter for the Homeless Options” (Appendix A). Following discussion, the recommended option to provide a temporary warming shelter tent in the Centennial Park parking lot was not supported, however, the following motion was approved:

Motion # & Meeting Date	Motion Details
Motion Number: 2021-110. March 8, 2021	That Council directs staff to participate in an At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force with representatives of the City of Surrey and other stakeholders mandated to address the needs of at-risk and vulnerable people living in White Rock and South Surrey, including those who are food insecure and homeless.

The At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force (later renamed the At-Risk and Priority Population Task Force) was formed and members of the Task Force identified three tasks in its work plan, which were:

1. Determine suitable location(s) for shelter by Fall 2021 for when extreme weather may be experienced.
2. Explore grant funding options to cover the lease and other expenses for an extreme weather shelter from October to late March.
3. Explore the idea of permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness in the South Surrey/White Rock area.

Of the above three work plan items, Task #1 was completed with the opening of an extreme weather shelter at the Mount Olive Lutheran Church in October 2021. This shelter is currently operating between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. during periods of extreme inclement weather.

Items 2 and 3 of the Task Force work plan are longer term tasks.

At the October 27, 2021 At-Risk and Priority Population Task Force meeting, a decision was made to disband the Task Force and refer Task Items 2 and 3 to the City's Housing Advisory Committee.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

In late December 2021, Council received letters from local citizens and the Homelessness Association of BC asking Council to setup a warming shelter for people experiencing homelessness in the South Surrey/ White Rock area, especially due to the extreme cold weather forecasted to occur in this region over the Christmas holidays.

Following a review of civic facility options, it was determined that the City did not have any unused civic facilities to address this need as was provided during the summer heat wave. There was also a staffing shortage over the holiday season due to previously scheduled vacations and sick leave.

The summer cooling stations were opened during a period when Provincial Health Orders banned all indoor fitness activities and large group gatherings, therefore, the White Rock Community Centre was available to offer respite from the heat for small groups of people if social distancing and other COVID-19 safety protocols was followed. Also, no specially trained workers were needed to assist people attending the cooling centres as the space was mostly utilized by local seniors.

Providing services for people experiencing homelessness requires specialized trained workers who are experienced in dealing with people who often may have mental health issues and/or addictions. The Extreme Weather Shelter at Mount Olive Lutheran Church is operated by staff from a community agency called Options with funding provided by the Province. The temporary warming shelter that was recently setup at Peace Portal Alliance Church was operated by staff from the Engaged Community of Canada Society.

As City recreation centre staff are not trained to work with people facing homelessness who often are experiencing health, mental health and addiction, staff reached out and received a quote of \$3,000/day from the Engaged Communities of Canada Society (ECCS) for operating a warming shelter for up to 30 people experiencing homelessness in South Surrey and White Rock, or \$1,750/day for up to 10 people. ECCS is available to start operating a warming shelter as early as January 15 once a suitable facility is identified. ECCS would need at least 4 days of notice to

mobilize their team to operate a warming shelter and would need commitments of a minimum of seven (7) days for each deployment. If space were identified and staff were able to provide 4 days of notice in anticipation of inclement weather, delivering services for one week would equate to a staffing cost of \$12,250 weekly for 10 people in need or \$21,000 weekly for 30 people in need. However, these services may be difficult to deliver as inclement weather can be hard to predict. Due to the need to provide 4 days of advance notice for a minimum 7 day commitment, staff are providing options for consideration for providing services for a block of time (January 11 or 15 to end of February).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The City has not budgeted for the provision of a warming shelter for people experiencing homelessness.

Staff will explore grant funding to help fund this expense, however, no grants have been secured at this time.

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Residents and businesses located near the site of a temporary shelter for local people experiencing homelessness should be consulted and/or notified before the shelter is operational.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT/IMPLICATIONS

Engineering and Municipal Operations and Fire Rescue will need to approve the placement, capacity and structural engineering of a tent structure and portable heaters and power generators placed on City property to ensure public safety.

A building permit for the warming shelter tent will be required from the City's Planning and Development Services Department.

In addition, The City's Parking Services staff, under the Planning and Development Services Department, will need to notify area businesses if the gravel parking lot located at the corner of Johnston Road and Russell Avenue is repurposed for use for a warming shelter tent. This parking lot is heavily used by customers of businesses located in the City's Town Centre area.

OPTIONS / RISKS / ALTERNATIVES

Below are options for consideration in providing temporary warming shelters in White Rock for people experiencing homelessness.

Option 1

Rental and installation of a warming shelter tent with heat, power, portable washrooms, portable hand sink, staffing and overnight security to be located on the gravel parking lot at the corner of Russell Avenue and Johnston Road, adjacent to where the Rotary Club of White Rock/Peace Portal Alliance Church take-away lunch program location. A breakdown of costs from January 15 to the end of February 2022 is as follows:

Tent rental with forced air propane heater	\$ 15,000
Portable washroom and hand sink rental	\$ 2,250
Portable power generator and fuel	\$ 7,500
Overnight security	\$ 11,250
Trained staff experienced at working with homeless people	\$ 135,000
Total Expenses.....	<u>\$ 171,000</u>

These costs could be lower by reducing the staff levels if the weather between now and the end of February is warmer, or costs could be greater if more cold weather occurs in the month of March and the shelter would have to be staffed again. **Option 2**

Provide use of Halls, A, B and C, the washrooms and kitchen at White Rock Community Centre from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily with trained contracted staff experienced at working with homeless people. The estimated cost to provide this warming shelter option from January 15 to the end of February 2022 is as follows:

Trained staff experienced at working with homeless people	\$ 135,000
Additional City Recreation Attendant staff to provide building security and access to the facility outside of regular business hours for 9 hours/day on weekdays, 11 hours/day on Saturdays and 15 hours on Sundays.....	\$ 14,250
Additional deep cleaning of washrooms etc. following each day of use	\$ 13,500
Estimated loss of program registrations and rental revenue	<u>\$ 50,000</u>
Total Expenses:.....	<u>\$ 212,750</u>

These costs could be lower by reducing the staff levels if the weather between now and the end of February is warmer, or costs could be greater if cold weather occurs in the month of March and the shelter would have to be staffed again.

Staff do not recommended Option 2 due to the higher cost, the anticipated negative feedback from White Rock Community Centre's regular user groups whose programs and rentals would be cancelled, and from area residents and businesses who may oppose a homeless shelter located in their neighborhood.

Option 3

Provide use of Halls, A, B and C, the washrooms and kitchen at White Rock Community Centre from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily from January 11 to January 25, then relocate the temporary warming shelter to a tent located at the corner of Johnston Road and Russell Avenue. The advantages of this option are that a warming shelter will be made available sooner, there will be more time available to arrange the warming tent, and there will be less impact on regular recreation programs held at White Rock Community Centre. This option will require trained contracted staff experienced in working with homeless people, extra cleaning and Recreation Attendant staff at the White Rock Community Centre for two weeks, and the cost of renting and equipping a tent shelter. The total estimated cost for this option from January 11 to the end of February 2022 is as follows:

Trained staff experienced at working with homeless people (for 1 ½ months)	\$ 135,000
Tent rental with forced air propane heater (for 1 month).....	\$ 10,000
Portable washroom and hand sink rental (for 1 month).....	\$ 1,500
Portable power generator and fuel (for 1 month).....	\$ 2,500
Overnight security (for 1 month)	\$ 3,750
Additional City Recreation Attendant staff to provide building security and access to the facility outside of regular business hours for 9 hours/day on weekdays, 11 hours/day on Saturdays and 15 hours on Sundays from January 11 to January 25, 2022.....	\$ 4,500

Additional deep cleaning of washrooms etc. following each day of use	\$ 2,800
Estimated loss of program registrations and rental revenue over the two weeks	\$ 7,500
Total Expenses	<u>\$ 167,550</u>

Option 4

A fourth option is to consider providing warming shelter services for local people experiencing homelessness when the City is able to secure funding from other government or charitable sources. In the past, the responsibility for providing warming shelters for local people experiencing homelessness has been borne by the local faith community, with financial assistance from the Provincial Government.

The City of Surrey does not support funding a warming shelter in South Surrey, despite the majority of local people experiencing homelessness are located in the South Surrey area.

CONCLUSION

Since February 2021, Council has received letters from members of some local faith based organizations, and more recently from the Homelessness Association of BC asking White Rock City Council to take on the responsibility for providing a warming shelter for local people in South Surrey and White Rock experiencing homelessness.

Council responded by establishing an At Risk and Vulnerable Population Task Force with representatives of the City of Surrey and other stakeholders mandated to address the needs of at-risk and vulnerable people living in White Rock and South Surrey.

The Task Force was successful in establishing an Extreme Weather Shelter at the Mount Olive Lutheran Church to provide overnight shelter for people experiencing homelessness, however, this shelter is not available from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on extreme weather days and is not open on nights not declared by the Province as an extreme weather event.

In this corporate report, staff have provided three options for consideration related to providing warming shelters in the City of White Rock for local people experiencing homelessness, and a fourth option is to for the City to provide warming shelter services once funding from other government or charitable sources can be secured.

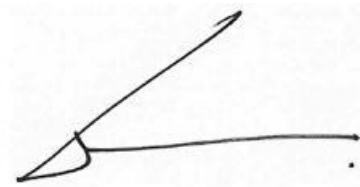
Respectfully submitted,



Eric Stepura
Director of Recreation and Culture

Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer

If Council wishes to consider this new service, it is recommended that it be referred to 2022 budget deliberations where it can be considered concurrently with the rest of City services offered. Considering this service in isolation will not provide context in relation to the overall budget. This is a considerable expense and potentially a service that the municipality will be expected to deliver annually.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Guillermo Ferrero', written over a light blue grid background.

Guillermo Ferrero
Chief Administrative Officer

- Appendix A: Warming Shelter for the Homeless Options Corporate Report of March 8, 2021
- Appendix B: Cold Weather Advisory 2021-2022
- Appendix C: Orange Weather Notification 2021-12-20
- Appendix D: VCH Cold Weather Advisory December 21, 2021