



Report to Council

From the Office of Councillor Amy Lubik

Date: May 14, 2021

Subject: Request for Council Support to Explore Warming Shelters in Port Moody 2021 Update

Purpose

To request that Council direct staff to ensure that there will be space available in the city for the most marginalized members of our society during extremely cold weather and liaise with the Coordinator of the Tri-Cities Homelessness and Housing Task Force and potentially BC Housing such that shelter is available before such weather is upon us.

If this is feasible the intent would be to create a policy by which the city could make a low-barrier and welcoming space available to those experiencing homelessness during extreme weather events. Port Moody may not be the first option, but we should be able to find shelter for people if needed.

Recommendations

THAT Kyle Centre be reserved from January to March 2022 for a potential emergency shelter for extreme weather should the need arise as recommended in the report dated May 14, 2021 from Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Request for Council Support to Explore Warming Shelters in Port Moody 2021 Update;

AND THAT programing and/or usage during the months of January to March be short-term only so that the facility could be used on short notice for an emergency shelter should this be necessary;

AND THAT staff liaise with the Coordinator of the Tri-Cities Homelessness and Housing Task Force to make sure this option is known to be available should the Tri-Cities as a whole not be able to arrange a cold weather program.

Background

In January 2020 council passed the following resolution:

RC20/059-060

THAT staff be directed to liaise with the Coordinator of the Tri-Cities Homelessness and Housing Task Group and potentially BC Housing to understand what would be needed

to provide a warming shelter at a Port Moody Facility, and report back to Council with options as recommended in the report dated January 15, 2020 from Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Request for Council Support to Explore Warming Shelters in Port Moody.

The rationale was below:

Metro Vancouver is generally thought to be a mild climate; however, on occasion we do see extreme cold weather. That extremes of temperature and potential for more severe precipitation and snow come with our changing climate (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/climate-change-snowfall-1.3974782>).

Snow falls such as were experienced in the TriCities the week of January 14th left many people stuck at home, but for those who do not have a fixed address, the weather can be extremely harsh if they are nowhere to go that is warm, welcoming, and low barrier (<https://www.vancouverisawesome.com/vancouver-news/vancouver-homeless-extreme-cold-donations-needed-2021670>). Homelessness is also on the rise in Metro Vancouver and the Tri-Cities (<https://www.tricitynews.com/news/modular-housing-needed-for-tri-city-homeless-group-says-1.23977810>).

Tri-Cities Homelessness and Housing Partners suggested there are ways to help when the weather is this severe: "A warming center would be ideal for folks outside as even if they use the mat programs they are displaced from 7 am til 10 pm. [People experiencing homelessness] have made mention that they have no where to go, and hanging out at the mall or Tim Horton's is not ideal as they will be asked to leave. They just need somewhere warm to be with out judgment while waiting for the programs to re-open. Even somewhere to get a hot drink would be nice for them." [pers com, January 2020]

Port Moody is currently looking for spaces to host transition, supportive, youth, refugee and/or low barrier housing through BC Housing. As we currently do not have these services, and there do not appear to be many opportunities for warming during the day, one option is to explore what civic facilities may be appropriate for a low-barrier warming shelter during the day when people do not have map programs available to them. This report requests council to support to direct staff to liaise with BC Housing and the Coordinator of the Tri-Cities Homelessness and Housing Task Force to understand what would be needed to provide a warming shelter at a Port Moody Civic Facility, and report back to council with options. If a pilot were to be success, a policy could be set up through the city such that when temperatures reach a certain threshold, space is made available to those experiencing homelessness.

This is an opportunity to show leadership and compassion.

Discussion

In late 2020 staff reported back to council that the most usable space in Port Moody for an emergency warming shelter and/or overnight shelter was Kyle Centre due in part to other spaces including churches not being available; however, this facility had already been rented to the arts centre and other potential sites did not go forward. The issues with some of the usually

facilities that operated mat or shelter programs was in some cases related to COVID-19 in 2020-2021; however, even without COVID-19 in early 2020 the Tri-Cities were not prepared to shelter the most precarious and marginalized of our community.

In early 2021 the Tri-Cities as a whole began to scramble to find somewhere people could go as temperatures dropped to the negatives; however, a place for even a fraction of those in need was found only after some frigid days. This needs to be remedied.

It is our hope that vaccinations will be complete by the next cold season and of course that we will make a significant impact on homelessness in the Tri-Cities; sadly, the need is likely to be as great next year unless a plan is in place and we currently do not know what a concerted plan may entail for the Tri-Cities or when and if it will be develop such a plan. The Homelessness and Housing Task Force is currently looking to establish a concrete plan; it is essential that we as a community at least offer to find a way to take care of our most marginalized residents. Given the current status, we need to be prepared, as we have been caught leaving people in the cold two years in a row. In a changing climate, we are likely to see more extreme weather which will continue to impact the most marginalized community members unless we address the barriers people face and the gaps we have in supports.

Other Option(s)

1. THAT staff be directed to design any Kyle Centre Winter – Spring programming and/or usage/rental agreements such that it is possible to provide an overnight shelter for extreme weather, should the need arise;

AND THAT staff liaise with the Coordinator of the Tri-Cities Homelessness and Housing Task Force to make sure this option is known to be available should the Tri-Cities as a whole not be able to arrange a cold weather program as recommended in the report dated May 14, 2021 from the Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Request for Council Support to Explore Warming Shelters in Port Moody 2021 Update.

2. THAT the report date May 14, 2020 from Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Request for Council Support to Explore Warming Shelters in Port Moody 2021 Update be received for information.

Financial Implications

Unknown – estimated forgone facilities rental costs.

Council Strategic Plan Objectives

- Climate Change Preparedness
- Community Health
- Reducing Inequities