

NO: **R050**

COUNCIL DATE: **March 9, 2020**

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **March 5, 2020**

FROM: **General Manager, Planning & Development
General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Culture
General Manager, Engineering**

FILE: **5080-01**

SUBJECT: **Update on Extreme Weather Program and Options for a Daytime Warming
Centre for Homeless People in North Surrey**

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning & Development Department, the Parks, Recreation & Culture Department, and the Engineering Department recommend that Council:

1. Receive this report for information; and
2. Provide direction on preferred options for a daytime warming centre in North Surrey for the 2020 / 2021 Extreme Weather Response Program, as follows:
 - Option 1. City calls upon existing Extreme Weather Response shelters in the City Centre to volunteer to provide space for a daytime warming centre;
 - Option 2. City leases a commercial space;
 - Option 3. City continues to focus on development of supportive housing and explores the creation of a Health and Resource Centre for North Surrey; or
 - Option 4. City provides space for a warming centre in a civic facility.

INTENT

The intent of this report is to provide Council with an update on the 2019 – 2020 Extreme Weather Response (“EWR”), and options for a daytime warming centre for people experiencing homeless in North Surrey during times of extreme winter weather.

BACKGROUND

BC Housing Extreme Weather Response Program

The EWR Program provides temporary shelter spaces (generally mats on the floor) during extreme weather conditions over the winter. BC Housing funds the EWR Program, including contracting an EWR Coordinator for Surrey. The EWR Program operates from November 1 to

March 31 each year. EWR shelters are only open when Extreme Weather Alerts (“EWR Alerts”) are in effect. In Surrey, EWR alerts will typically mean that temperatures are at or below zero degrees Celsius. Temporary EWR shelters typically operate in churches and community agencies. EWR are only open for overnight stays. No meals or other services are provided. A Surrey / White Rock EWR Plan, prepared by the EWR Coordinator hired by BC Housing, includes the identified EWR shelter locations and the weather conditions under which an EWR Alert is called.

DISCUSSION

Surrey EWR Use in 2019 – 2020

The total EWR capacity in Surrey is 128 mats provided at eight locations across Surrey; a further 34 mats are provided in White Rock and Delta. In 2019 – 2020, there has been enough capacity in Surrey when EWR Alerts are called. EWR shelters in City Centre have sometimes operated at maximum capacity; however, EWR shelters in Guildford and Fleetwood have provided additional capacity, with transportation available to help people access those sites. Appendix “I” provides information on EWR use at the shelters in Surrey, White Rock, and Delta over the past winter.

Street Homeless Population in North Surrey

There are an estimated 100 homeless people in North Surrey who are not staying in a 24/7 shelter or supportive housing project. This is a conservative estimate, and staff are hopeful that the pending results from the 2020 Homeless Count, completed on March 3rd and 4th, 2020, will provide a better estimate. This includes:

- 50 people staying in the overnight shelter at Surrey Urban Mission (shelter closes at 7:00am daily; shelter is consistently at capacity); and
- An estimated 50 people using EWR shelters in North Surrey.

During the daytime hours, the homeless population in North Surrey are out in the community with all their belongings. With the 2018 closure of the Front Room Drop-in on 135a Street, there is no dedicated drop-in centre for people experiencing homelessness to access during the day in North Surrey.

Options for a Daytime Warming Centre in North Surrey

BC Housing does not provide funding for daytime warming centres that are opened during EWR alerts.

Four options for next steps are listed below, along with staff comments related to each feasibility. For each of these options, funding would be required as there are no City funds currently available to cover the costs involved with the operation of a daytime warming centre.

- Option 1. City calls upon existing EWR shelters in the City Centre to volunteer to provide space for a daytime warming centre.
 - The EWR Coordinator for Surrey was unsuccessful in identifying an existing EWR location in City Centre willing to provide space for use as a daytime warming centre.

- Existing EWR shelters often have multiple daytime uses, some of which are revenue-generating. If space were available, other uses may be incompatible with a warming centre (for example, childcare and seniors' programs).
- There would be costs associated with ongoing operations.

Option 2. City leases a commercial space.

- Staff advise that it would be highly improbable to negotiate a lease with a private landlord in the next few weeks, for a lease duration that would also only be for a few more weeks. Staff can explore for potential partnerships with private business.
- There would be a cost associated with the lease, any needed renovations, as well as ongoing operations. There is no associated budget at this time.

Option 3. City continues to focus on development of supportive housing and explores the creation of a Health and Resource Centre for North Surrey.

- Housing is the solution for homelessness, so the City continues to focus its efforts on increasing the supportive housing supply, including the five proposed supportive housing modular projects to be developed in partnership with BC Housing.
- In the longer term, staff will continue to explore the option of BC Housing in collaboration with Fraser Health on planning a Health and Resource Centre in North Surrey. Such a centre could be open year-round during the daytime and could be doubling as a warming centre. A Health and Resource Centre could provide people experiencing homelessness with access to health and other supportive services, as well as a drop-in space.
- This is a long-term option with possibility of opening for next winter.

Option 4. City provides space for a warming centre in a civic facility.

- The City offers diverse programming at its facilities each day, including drop-in and registered programs for all ages. Hosting a warming centre in a civic facility could significantly impact the most vulnerable populations served at its facilities, including pre-school aged children, youth, and seniors. It would also require modification to and/or cancellation of programs and services offered.
- Based on previous experience of operating an extreme weather shelter at the North Surrey Recreation Centre during the winter of 2019, staff anticipate significant impacts related to managing client visitors of the warming centre, cleanliness, and other negative impacts to staff and patrons.
- There would be costs associated with ongoing operations, including support for an increase in janitorial and security costs and loss of program revenues.
- This should only be considered in a situation similar to Emergency Social Services ("ESS") where an emergency has been declared.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The work of this initiative supports the objectives of the City's Sustainability Charter 2.0. In particular, this work relates to Sustainability Charter 2.0 theme of Inclusion and Public Safety. Specifically, this work supports the following Desired Outcomes ("DO") and Strategic Directions ("SD"):

- Inclusion DO2: Surrey is a caring and compassionate city that learns about and supports its residents of all backgrounds, demographics and life experiences.
- Inclusion SD6: Create, enhance and increase awareness of services that support people with economic barriers.
- Public Safety DO5: Surrey is recognized and perceived as a leader in establishing and maintaining collaborative partnerships for community safety and well-being.
- Public Safety SD4: Enhance intergovernmental relations, and ensure broad partnerships and collaboration to address multi-jurisdictional social issues (e.g. homelessness, mental health, addictions, etc.)

CONCLUSION

This report provides background information on the EWR Program in Surrey and the current street homeless population in North Surrey. Four options are provided for opening a daytime warming centre for people experiencing homeless in North Surrey during extreme winter weather. Considerations are listed for each option.

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Appendix "I" EWR Use: Surrey, White Rock, and Delta 2019 – 2020 (as of February 27, 2020)

Appendix “I”

EWR Use: Surrey, White Rock, and Delta 2019 – 2020 (as of February 27, 2020)

Shelter	Area	Opening Date	# nights open	Bed Capacity	Range (low / high # of people)	# Beds Occupied (most recent report*)	Average Occupancy
Pacific Community Church	Cloverdale	Oct 29 2019	76	25	1 – 27	19	36%
Phoenix Centre #1	City Centre	Oct 29 2019	69	15	5 – 22	12	75%
Pacific Community Services Society (PCRS) – youth only	City Centre	Nov 16 2019	67	10	0 – 2	0	1%
Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association (FRAFCA)	City Centre	Nov 19 2019	73	12	4 – 16	12	84%
Nightshift	City Centre	Nov 25 2019	69	15	1 – 19	14	66%
Fleetwood Church	Fleetwood	Jan 03 2020	43	28	0 – 6	0	4%
Guildford Shelter	Guildford	Jan 13 2020	36	10	2 – 11	9	61%
Phoenix Centre #2	City Centre	Jan 14, 2020	12	13	0 – 7	0	26%
Neighbouring Communities							
Peninsula Church	White Rock	Oct 29 2019	64	25	4 – 28	16	55%
Delta EWR Shelter	Delta	Oct 29 2019	75	9	1 – 16	2	19%

* Number of Beds Occupied: reported for the last date for which the shelter operator provided the bed occupancy data to BC Housing.