

March 31, 2016

Council stands united with organizations supporting homeless people in Campbell River

The City of Campbell River is working with BC Housing to help ensure people who are homeless in our community have a safe place to sleep.

With the extreme weather shelter due to close for the season, and a sobering assessment centre proposed, but opening date uncertain, Mayor Andy Adams placed a call to BC Housing to ask if they could help temporarily fill the gap in services.

“BC Housing has confirmed they will consider a request to keep the extreme weather shelter open at its current location at its regular hours,” says Mayor Adams. “Council is extremely grateful and appreciative of the ongoing support from BC Housing for our community, and we are looking forward to working collaboratively to find solutions.”

In the meantime, Campbell River Family Services has confirmed it will keep the extreme weather shelter open until at least April 4.

“Campbell River is a caring community, and Council greatly appreciates the dedication of a number of organizations and community groups working to alleviate the immediate distress and provide critical services for people experiencing homelessness,” the Mayor adds. “We all agree that homelessness is an issue, and that the wellbeing of our most vulnerable citizens affects the entire community. We recognize that the emergency shelter is a temporary solution, and we know that we will be most effective working together for longer-term housing, and for addiction treatment when drug and alcohol use is related to homelessness.”

Currently, the City is also working with Island Health, which has announced funding support for a sobering assessment centre, and a report earlier this month to Council outlined potential locations in the area between Dogwood and Ironwood Street, generally zoned for community care and/or social care facility uses. In 2014, a building at the corner of 12th Ave. and Fir St. was identified as a potential location for a sobering assessment centre. This property was acquired by the City through a land exchange in early 2015, but the building is not yet vacant or available.

“Council is reviewing potential locations and will engage the community and businesses prior to making any recommendations,” the Mayor says.

The Campbell River RCMP is also actively working with Island Health to establish street level access to health care support and services for adults in Campbell River living with substance disorders. A similar program was launched in Courtenay last year.

“For many years, Council has been a voice for supportive housing initiatives, and caring for all members of our community is a key Council priority,” says Mayor Adams. “The City, as one of many organizations that shares this concern, looks for opportunities to partner and advocate for potential solutions – and is prepared to contribute when opportunities arise. From the original homelessness task force and coalition to the new Community Health Network, to meetings with Island Health and law enforcement, we continue to work, often behind the scenes, to align local efforts. We are encouraged by the anticipated details around new provincial and federal government investment in affordable housing, and with the support of BC Housing, Island Health and the ongoing commitment of social services organizations, we are pushing to create lasting improvements for vulnerable people in our community. We will continue to advocate for funding support from the Province, and we urge residents, groups and businesses to do their part to help as well.”

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Background information next page

City initiatives on affordable housing and alleviating homelessness

- 2016 City budget includes \$25,000 grant funding for social needs initiatives
- In the fall of 2015, the City funded a \$15,000 restoration of the extreme weather shelter, including repainting the inside and outside of the shelter and installing a more efficient heating system – and Council continued to lobby for long-term supportive housing at the Union of BC Municipalities.
- The City also sponsored the cost to run one of the rooms (\$6,000) in the extreme weather shelter throughout the entire winter.
- Homeless people in Campbell River were able to use one of the 16 beds in the converted shipping container shelter again this winter from November 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016. Campbell River Family Services Society managed the shelter, located on Radiant Life Community Church property on Cypress St.
- In 2009, the total number of unsheltered people in Campbell River was 37. A survey conducted in September 2015 indicates that number has grown to 52. In addition, approximately 33 people are homeless, but staying in local shelters.
- Community Health Network – City actively participates at political and staff level in support of regional initiative
- Emergency shelter located on vacant land next to the fire hall for the first two winters
- Homelessness Task Force and Coalition – approved the allocation of \$319,000 Vancouver Island Health Association funding for homelessness programs and support
- Land donation for women’s transition house (Rose Harbour) donated development and servicing fees
- Palmer (Nikola) place - donated development and servicing fees
- Habitat for Humanity three property donations
- Sustainable Official Community Plan – incorporates social wellbeing/social issues
- Integrated Community Sustainability Plan incorporates social wellbeing/social issues
- Supporting our Social Mosaic: A Social Development Plan (2010)
- Affordable Housing Strategy (2010)
- Social Planning Committee
- Youth Engagement Strategy
- Crime Reduction Strategy