



2205 Otter Point Road, Sooke, British Columbia, Canada V9Z 1J2

Phone: (250) 642-1634

Fax: (250) 642-0541

email: [info@sooke.ca](mailto:info@sooke.ca)

website: [www.sooke.ca](http://www.sooke.ca)

---

## NEWS RELEASE

June 24, 2020

### **SOOKE SEARCHES FOR SOLUTION TO PANDEMIC HOMELESSNESS**

SOOKE – The District of Sooke’s Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is actively looking for a new facility to house approximately 14 local homeless people recently displaced to Ed MacGregor Park.

A small homeless camp was struck at the park June 20<sup>th</sup>, when residents of the SEAPARC temporary housing facility were asked to vacate to allow the center to resume operations that were halted due to COVID-19. Local RCMP have maintained contact with those living in the park and have told the District that maintaining outdoor living at the park is not viable, safe or in the community’s best interest.

“Part of embracing ‘the new normal’ during the pandemic is thinking outside the box, forging new relationships with community partners and finding solutions that work for everyone,” said Mayor Maja Tait. “In Sooke, we have big hearts and we take care of our own. When we see unhoused members in a park we step in to find a better way.”

To date, the EOC, in conjunction with the Sooke Homeless Coalition, have looked at over 50 possible temporary housing sites in the area to ensure health and safety standards can be met. Funding support from BC Housing is contingent on finding a suitable building, as all temporary, outdoor living situations are ineligible for provincial funding.

Securing a suitable site means the Sooke Region Communities Health Network would be able to provide on-site operations. Just as they provided services at SEAPARC, multiple resource agencies - including the Sooke Shelter Society, AVI Health and Community Services, as well as Island Health - would provide wrap-around services to residents at the new site.

“I sincerely thank SEAPARC for stepping up in April to help us take care of our vulnerable neighbors who had no place to go when COVID-19 hit,” said Tait. “It was always intended as a transitional stabilization unit, and we now have to find a longer-term solution that will help bridge us to the opening of 49 shelter rate housing units that will be available in the next 12-18 months.”

Announced in December 2018, the District of Sooke and the CRD Board, in partnership with the BC government, recommended land acquisition and development of two adjacent properties located at Drennan Street and Sooke Road as well as an additional property located at Charters Road. Along with the majority

affordable rate units, the projects offer stable (shelter rate) housing for those experiencing homelessness and are expected to be ready in 2021 and 2022.

The need to support Sooke's vulnerable population through the COVID-19 pandemic was first identified through the Sooke Homeless Coalition in March. The EOC is the lead on planning and sourcing resources, in consultation with external agencies.

During the Provincial State of Emergency, the EOC remains committed, and is working, to:

- uphold all public health orders issued by Dr. Bonnie Henry, B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer;
- find a new, temporary housing solution for its most-in-need residents;
- secure all fire and building inspections on any new temporary housing facility;
- secure BC Housing funding to operate a new temporary housing facility.

---

**Media Contact:**

Maja Tait, Mayor

District of Sooke 250-514-6466 | [mtait@sooke.ca](mailto:mtait@sooke.ca)

**District Contact and Social Media Channels:**

Website: [www.sooke.ca](http://www.sooke.ca) Twitter: [@SookeCa](https://twitter.com/SookeCa) Facebook: [Emergency Program](#)

District Phone: 250-642-1634

Fax: 250-642-0541

District Email: [info@sooke.ca](mailto:info@sooke.ca)

Fire Dept. Phone: 250-642-5422

Fax: 250-642-3840