

FAQ

Frequently asked Questions New temporary homeless shelter

Q: Why wont you tell the community where this shelter is?

A: The residents at the shelter are some of our community's most vulnerable and marginalized members.

A: They deserve a right to privacy, as we all do, as well as our compassion and support.

A: Just as we don't disclose the addresses of other residences like group homes or halfway houses, we are not disclosing or confirming the private property location of the temporary shelter at this time.

Q: Why was this decision made without the knowledge of the surrounding residents?

A: The District remains committed to updating the community on all significant issues that impact our citizens.

A: We understand the community's concerns and will continue to keep residents updated, as we did in this situation, on all developments related to our efforts to address homelessness in Sooke.

A: This decision was made collaboratively with BC Housing, to address the ongoing presence of homelessness in Sooke that has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

A: Local police were very clear with the District that having people camp in the park was not in anyone's best interest. We acted quickly and have found a new temporary location that will provide approximately 17 shelter spaces for those in the community experiencing homelessness, including people who were camping in Ed MacGregor Park.

A: The homelessness situation, while relatively small in Sooke, is not new to our community. When we have vulnerable members of our community living in a park, we have to act.

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

Q: How was this decision made?

A: As explained back in March when COVID-19 and the resulting orders from BC's Public Health Officer and the Province were handed down, the District of Sooke Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is the lead on planning and sourcing resources related to pandemic-related issues. When the Sooke Homeless Coalition first identified the increasing need to support our community's homeless population, the EOC got to work.

A: That's how the District found the interim emergency shelter space at SEAPARC which operated with the full support of many local agencies and the RCMP, without major incident.

A: The same plan is in place for this new location.

Q: The surrounding community had no say in this decision. How do we make our voices heard?

A: The District remains committed to keeping the community up to date as plans for the temporary shelter progress.

A: Members of the public can provide comment on this issue in writing via email at info@sooke.ca

Q: Where is this money coming from for this shelter? Is there a cost of this to the district of Sooke? When will we see a breakdown of the costs that will be incurred to ensure this is a responsible financial decision?

A: BC Housing will assume all renovation and operations costs.

A: The District's role, through the EOC, was to find a suitable location. This has been done.

Q: How will you keep the surrounding neighbourhood and residents safe?

A: As was the case at SEAPARC, and the camp at the park, the RCMP will be assisting with maintaining ongoing safety at the new temporary shelter and the surrounding community.

A: Questions related to how the RCMP will continue to keep the community safe are best directed to them.

Q: Will the members of the community have a say in the operation of the shelter?

A: The Sooke Region Communities Health Network will provide on-site operations. As well, multiple resource agencies - including the Sooke Shelter Society, AVI Health and Community Services, as well as Island Health will provide wrap-around services to residents.

A: The RCMP is also a key member of the community that will be keeping residents at the shelter, as well as the surrounding community, safe.

A: It is in everyone's best interests to ensure Sooke remains a caring, inclusive and safe place to call home.

Q: What other services are you providing to the community to ensure our safety and that crime rates stay low?

A: The District knows safety was maintained at both SEAPARC and Ed MacGregor Park and we fully expect the same will hold true at the new site.

A: For more details, it's recommend that you reach out to the RCMP.

Q: If the shelter becomes a problem (i.e. an increased rate in crime, the community feels unsafe, or other negative consequences), what actions will the district take to ensure that the problems are handled efficiently and the occupants will be evicted and moved to a more suitable location?

A: It's unfortunate that some choose to draw a direct link between homelessness and lawlessness.

A: The District, along with its partners, will manage any, and all, situations at the new shelter in the same way it did at SEAPARC and Ed MacGregor Park. Both situations served the basic needs of our homeless population without major incident.

A: The District sees the provision of the basic necessities of life as a hallmark of a compassionate community and we are happy to do our part. Housing our community's most vulnerable will benefit everyone in our community.

A: This is an interim and temporary fix to the problem of homelessness in Sooke that existed long before the pandemic.

A: And it's why Sooke has been working closely with BC Housing and the Province to build affordable housing including shelter rate accommodation.

A: A number of projects are on the go including development of two adjacent properties located at Drennan Street and Sooke Road as well as an additional property located at Charters . The projects offer stable (shelter rate) housing for those experiencing homelessness, and able to live independently. Charters housing is expected to be ready in 2021.

Q: Does the district have a plan? Or is it something that the district will attempt to navigate as it goes?

A: The District does have a plan and sees this interim shelter as a bridge to our long-term homelessness and supportive housing efforts.

A: For example, 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. The projects offer stable (helpter-rate housing for those experiencing homelessness, and able to live independently. Charters housing is expected to be ready in 2021.