



City of
Peterborough

To: Members of the General Committee

From: Sheldon Laidman, Commissioner of Community Services

Meeting Date: October 19, 2020

Subject: Report CSSS20-013
Emergency Shelter and Isolation Site – COVID-19

Purpose

To recommend a new location for a temporary emergency shelter and isolation site to meet the homelessness system's emergency shelter needs during COVID-19.

Recommendations

That Council approve the recommendations outlined in Report CSSS20-013, dated October 19, 2020, of the Commissioner of Community Services, as follows:

- a) That staff be directed to set up a temporary 24/7 emergency shelter and isolation site at the Community Services building (210 Wolfe Street) to replace the existing Overflow Shelter;
- b) That, if sufficient funds are not available to operate the temporary emergency shelter and isolation site through the Social Services Relief Fund for a period of two years, the Social Services General Assistance Reserve be used to fund the shortfall;
- c) That the CAO be authorized to enter into an agreement with Brock Street Mission to operate the temporary emergency shelter and isolation site for a period of up to two years; and
- d) That the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute such documents as are necessary to give effect to the foregoing on terms satisfactory to the Commissioner of Community Services and in forms acceptable to the City Solicitor.

Budget and Financial Implications

There may be budgetary or financial impacts on municipal budgets as a result of this report, depending on the amount of funding provided by the provincial government.

Opportunities to fund the recommended option presented in this report include the following:

1. Phase 2 Social Services Relief Fund provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing - A funding allocation of \$1,924,741 has been made available to the City subject to the submission of a business case. The current guidelines include a provision that all funds must be expended by March 31, 2021, however staff are working with Ministry representatives to determine if there is any flexibility in this provision.
2. Ontario Health East funding - An application has been submitted to Ontario Health East to cover funding for all medical and isolation costs related to COVID-19 and the homelessness system. Confirmation has been received that \$102,000 has been allocated to the City for its isolation model costs. A total funding request of \$2,248,000 has been made to Ontario Health East which is currently being reviewed by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.
3. Social Services General Assistance Reserve - The General Assistance Reserve Fund has a current balance of \$4,312,929. Most funds in this reserve do not have a specific long-term purpose and could be used towards the unique needs of the homelessness system during the COVID-19 emergency.

The current Overflow Shelter at Murray Street Baptist Church is fully funded in the 2021 budget and includes a \$3,000 monthly lease cost and \$16,500 for staffing. Staffing costs at the 210 Wolfe Street site would increase to \$31,500 per month to allow for 24/7 staffing as well as some additional costs for food.

Background

Effective early March 2020 the Social Services Division began planning for a COVID-19 local emergency shelter strategy that would allow for physical distancing within the homelessness shelter system.

At the same time, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) announced that they were providing additional Homelessness funding to communities to ensure local resources such as shelters, food banks, and other homelessness programs could continue. The City received \$1,101,000 in the first round of the Social Services Relief Funding (SSRF) which was used for programs using the established Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) guidelines.

This funding allowed the City to offset COVID-19 requirements around social distancing and isolation for individuals experiencing homelessness and to support the food security system. In addition to the Provincial support, the Federal government provided the United Way with \$632,180 under the Reaching Home initiative to support community homelessness responses. The City worked with the United Way and community partners to use this funding for additional costs incurred and services provided during the emergency.

COVID-19 Response Strategies

Built for Zero (BFZ) Peterborough continues to work to end homelessness despite the new challenges presented by the pandemic. The City and partners implemented a straightforward enhanced shelter model to provide accommodation and supports to people experiencing homelessness and for those who are either COVID-19 positive or have COVID-19 symptoms. As of the end of September 2020, the City did not have any confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 in the shelter system.

Some details of the early steps taken:

- Ensuring staff and shelter residents safety: The City has been working closely with Peterborough Public Health (PPH) to support infection prevention and control in the shelters, including the relocation of some shelter services to alternate locations.
- Intake processes and data improvements: The City instituted a centralized intake process into the shelter system that assesses homelessness prevention and diversion strategies as well as embeds COVID-19 screening measures from first point of contact.
- Families shelter services: The City worked with YES Shelter for Youth and Families to move families with children to motels and housing to allow for social distancing.
- Social distancing for shelters: A collective of community and health-care organizations including the City, Brock Mission, Peterborough Paramedics, and Peterborough Public Health (PPH) supported a physical distancing site for people experiencing homelessness at the Peterborough Sport and Wellness Centre (PSWC) until it was eligible to reopen. This site included space for the Brock Mission and the Overflow Shelter and was both managed and staffed by Brock Mission.
- Services for individuals awaiting test results: The City and a broad range of community and health services (health partners, Police, Paramedics, addictions and mental health providers as well as harm reduction services) used local motels for isolation for individuals who were waiting for COVID-19 test results.

- Rapid Rehousing Initiatives: Peterborough Built for Zero matched 193 households with housing between the months of January and March 2020. A Rapid Rehousing Initiative to prioritize access to housing for existing shelter clients and other housing efforts resulted in a further 194 households obtaining housing between April and September 2020.

Starting in May and June Social Services sought out other locations to host the Brock Mission and overflow shelters as social distancing requirements would greatly limit occupancy. An Expression of Interest (EOI) for space was sent out broadly with no response. Staff continued to assess other locations to find either a single location or two locations to support individuals experiencing homelessness.

In late July, the City purchased medical grade bed dividers for Brock Mission and the Overflow location (Murray St. Baptist Church) as Brock returned to their previous locations. The bed dividers create a physical barrier between beds that allow for an increased number of beds while meeting the health requirement to physically distance. The current system of supports at Brock Mission and the Overflow Shelter allows for a capacity of only 49 beds. This is currently meeting demand (Table 1) on most nights. The risk of increased demand exceeding this capacity on a more regular basis during the winter is significant. Table 2 includes information on the number of unique shelter users per month showing a greater usage in the winter and the number of overflow beds used. As many agencies and support services that offer services to homeless persons during the day are closed or providing reduced services due to COVID-19, there are limited options for individuals experiencing homelessness who must leave the Overflow Shelter during the day.

Furthermore, the agreement with Murray Street Church for the Overflow shelter was originally set to expire on October 31st. The congregation has provided its approval to remain until December 31, 2020 at this time. The congregation has stated it would re-evaluate this date in October again, leaving the long term usage of the Overflow shelter as a risk to the homelessness system. Based on these factors the City has continued to seek alternative locations.

Table 1 - Shelter Demand and Occupancy

(Note – occupancy rates during COVID-19 may not be comparable to previous periods as COVID-19 requirements changed the maximum occupancy allowed for some facilities)

Month	Brock Mission	Cameron House	Wellness Centre	YES Shelter – Youth Occupancy	YES Shelter – Family Occupancy
January	99%	101%	0%	98%	87%
February	101%	103%	0%	133%	89%
March	105%	94%	77%	97%	75%
April	0%	21%	104%	91%	0%
May	0%	69%	90%	97%	0%
June	0%	86%	91%	94%	0%
July	106%	94%	93%	107%	0%
August	96%	81%	0%	89%	0%
September	96%	90%	0%	65%	0%

Table 2 - Unique Shelter Users and Use of Overflow Beds

Month	Unique Shelter Users	Avg People Accessing Overflow per Night
January	223	18
February	210	19
March	184	11
April	181	0
May	162	0
June	152	0
July	172	10
August	172	8
September	160	11

Service expansions during the COVID-19 emergency have been funded by the Provincial SSRF and Federal Reaching Home allocations but will run out in late 2020. The second round of SSRF will be provided based on approved business cases to be reviewed by the Ministry of Municipal and Housing. The second round of SSRF is focused on immediate response as well as projects that can create longer-term solutions:

“Municipalities and urban Indigenous community partners will be able to use this funding for long-term, innovative housing solutions resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak. They can renovate shelters or purchase new facilities that will help with physical distancing in the short term and support longer-term, more sustainable solutions to homelessness. In addition, this funding could also be used to provide vulnerable people with food, shelter and supplies.”

Temporary Shelter Search

The EOI process noted above included the following features that represent the ideal location for a new temporary shelter space for replacing services formerly provided at the PSWC:

- Available 24 hours per day 7 days per week for 12 to 24 months
- Have between 6,000 to 10,000 square feet of space
- Additional separate space to allow individuals to for isolate
- Suitable for 70-person occupancy
- Contain a separate room for an office space
- Controlled entrance
- Heated and air conditioned
- 4 lockable washrooms
- 2 showers, or ability to install
- Fire alarm and suppression system
- Storage space
- 6 on-site parking spots
- Outdoor area suitable for a designated smoking area.

It was unrealistic to expect all these features would be attainable, so some compromise was expected.

When the EOI closed with no submissions, staff continued the search for a new shelter location. The locations listed below were investigated but either eliminated from consideration for the reasons listed or do not represent the primary option being recommended.

- **Northcrest Arena** emerged as an early option as a vacant City building, however, the extensive and costly repairs and upgrades needed for shelter occupancy eliminated this location as an option.

- **Kinsmen Arena** was considered in conjunction with the PSWC as the first temporary shelter. This location is not being considered as the facility is now fully open as a twin pad ice rink.
- **The Mount Community Centre** contains a large room that had the potential for accommodating most shelter activities with some moderate renovations. Accessibility issues removed this location from consideration.
- **Peterborough Collegiate Vocational School** was considered before the PSWC was chosen as the location for the temporary shelter. The physical layout of the site was deemed to be inappropriate for a shelter and difficult to supervise. Proximity to Peterborough Day Care Centre was a consideration.
- **Peterborough Armory** was not an option due to firearms being on site and the prohibitive security needed to maintain the location.
- **Morrow Building** was deemed unsuitable for shelter services.
- **Master's College and Seminary** (780 Argyle Street) was preparing their building to bring students back into the school in September when they were contacted and therefore not available for consideration.
- **Townsend Street Public Works Building** was removed from consideration due to inadequate facility space and active use by Peterborough Transit.
- **King George Public School** is an active construction site for the new school being built on Hunter Street East and not safe for shelter services.
- **Evinrude Multi-Purpose Room.** This location provided the original best option under City control to provide the full range of shelter services needed due to its size. The site could serve the full shelter needs of both Brock Mission and the Overflow Shelter. However, this site has been eliminated from consideration due to the COVID-19 protocols and distancing requirements to operate the connected twin pad arena. The twin pad is now operational and it is clear that the multi-purpose room will be essential to ensure the arena can be used at its full capacity to ensure proper congregation of teams prior to their ice times as well as a waiting area for parents when temperatures get colder. The Multi-purpose Room also continues to be the emergency backup location for the hospital if COVID-19 overwhelms the hospital system space.
- **Peterborough Library Auditorium.** This space was used in 2019 as a temporary shelter. Currently the auditorium space is being used for additional storage of books as all books need to be quarantined for 7 days to follow best practices. In addition to being used for additional space for books, the auditorium is also being used for storage of excess furniture that has been temporarily removed from the public spaces of the Library for Covid-19 compliance. Lastly,

the Library itself is only recently back to being open to the public and would be very disruptive to add a shelter use into the facility at this time.

- **Naval Club (24 Whitla St).** This property is to be acquired by the City pursuant to an agreement of purchase and sale for which the completion date has yet to be determined but is anticipated to be prior to November month end. When acquired, this site could accommodate 36 beds with physical distancing. The site provides a good interior layout for a shelter including a kitchen and office. However, the property would be difficult to supervise, there are competing uses mainly a large community horseshoe club, the City is considering using the property for Recreation programming, (further report will be coming to Council) and extensive life safety and kitchen upgrades would be required.
- **Community Training and Development Centre (681 Monaghan Rd).** This property would allow for approximately 35 beds with numerous rooms including office space and kitchen. However, despite the property being on an arterial road the property is located next to a school and within a neighbourhood and is distant from other services for this client base.
- **Former St Andrew's Church (441 Rubidge St).** This site is currently vacant and could provide up to 28 beds. The site is located in the downtown area close to other services. The site would, however, require extensive capital upgrades and the term of any lease would be an issue similar to what has occurred with the current Murray St Church overflow shelter.

As the search for a new site to replace the PSWC progressed, it became apparent there were limited options for all shelter clients to be housed in one location. The objective shifted to finding a location that would replace the Overflow Shelter (Murray Street Baptist Church) while maintaining services at Brock Mission (St. Paul's Presbyterian Church). The City currently has an agreement with Murray Street Baptist Church for the Overflow Shelter to be located on this site until December 31, 2020. Council approval for the operation of the Overflow Shelter by Brock Mission was approved until April 2020 with an option to extend for up to two years. The new Brock St Mission site is expected to open in March 2021 which will house 30 persons in the shelter portion as well as 15 housing units.

In addition to the need to provide a 24/7 shelter to replace the Overflow Shelter, the City is continuing to support an isolation system to ensure homeless persons can isolate from the rest of the homeless population during testing or if they show symptoms of COVID-19. This has been a successful model to date with no COVID-19 cases in the shelter system. As of October 6th, Social Services has arranged for 120 motel stays for people who need help self-isolating pending the results of a COVID-19 test (87 unique individuals). This is costly as it involves booking blocks of motel rooms along with additional costs for security, transportation, staff to monitor, and meals. Costs to date have averaged close to \$100,000 per month for this service early in the COVID-19 emergency and have been recently reduced to \$50,000 per month. Staff are continuing

to pursue funding from the Ministry of Health and looking at cheaper options as these costs are not sustainable within the municipal budget alone.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Community Services Building at 210 Wolfe Street be used to serve the homeless population during this temporary unique time period. It allows for the greatest occupancy of any option to meet a surge in demand, is in proximity to other client services, and requires limited capital upgrades to be used for a full 24/7 shelter. This significantly greater bed occupancy capability would alleviate additional system risks of other shelter facilities such as YES or Cameron House needing to close due to a COVID19 outbreak or a sudden lack of staffing. City staff are currently not occupying this building as City policy during the Covid-19 emergency is for those who can perform their work from home should do so. This policy is not expected to be lifted in the near future. The public inquiry function for the Recreation Division has been moved to the Peterborough Sport and Wellness Centre during the Covid-19 emergency as full time staff are available on site. Alternative work site arrangements would be pursued for Community Services staff to ensure all work expectations and requirements can continue to be met.

If Council does not approve the recommended option of repurposing 210 Wolfe Street, staff would expect to continue with the existing Overflow Shelter at Murray Street Church. The existing agreement expires on December 31, 2020 but staff have requested that the congregation consider allowing an extension until the new Brock Street Mission opens. It is not certain that the congregation will support such an extension.

Costs for Emergency Shelter Options

The recommended option would allow for the operation of a new 24/7 operation to replace the Overflow Shelter which would have additional staffing costs due to increased staffing hours. Current staffing costs of the Overflow Shelter is \$16,500 per month and this would increase to \$31,500 for a 24/7 operation. Anticipated capital upgrade costs would be less than \$50,000. In order to be a full 24/7 operation, showers would be the main capital upgrade needed. The 2021 draft budget includes for the costs of the operation of the Overflow Shelter which includes staffing as well as a \$3000 monthly lease cost.

It would be expected that with any option involving a City owned facility that the City would seek to recoup the full operational, capital, and building maintenance costs associated with the use of the building through the various Provincial funding programs identified earlier in this report.

Business Case to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

While Phase 2 of the Social Services Relief Fund has provided an announced allocation to the City, a business case was required to be submitted conforming with provincial objectives. A business case has been submitted to cover the anticipated costs of a full

24/7 shelter system and isolation model conforming with the allocation provided to the City. This included staffing of the new site, lease costs, utility and maintenance costs, capital upgrades required, rental of motel rooms for an isolation site, and additional costs for the isolation site including transportation, meals, and security.

Next Steps

These are the anticipated next steps for the recommended option of using the Community Services building at 210 Wolfe Street as the Emergency Shelter and Isolation Site:

1. Entering into a revised agreement with Brock Street Mission to operate the new shelter;
2. Capital upgrades if necessary, to occupy as a shelter. The Community Services building would allow for the overflow shelter to be moved to the site earlier while a full 24/7 shelter would require installation of showers;
3. Preparation of the building including movement of City staff. This would include a plan for an alternative workplace for the 15 full time staff who currently have offices at the Community Services building.

Summary

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, shelter services that meet Public Health requirements for physical distancing and infection control must also continue. This includes 24/7 service provision for all shelter clients and Isolation Shelter for COVID-19 positive or probable individuals. Several options and locations have been explored. Funding is available through the Social Services General Assistance Reserve however a business case has been submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to ensure full costs are recouped through the Social Services Relief Fund.

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