



**Committee of the Whole Report
For the Meeting of November 2, 2023**

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** October 27, 2023
From: Shannon Perkins, Director Bylaw and Licencing Services
Subject: Parks Relocation Coordinator – Update Report

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council proceed with 1st, 2nd and 3rd readings of bylaw No. 23-070: Parks Regulation Bylaw Amendment Bylaw (No. 18) to prohibit overnight sheltering at all times in Stadacona Park, Topaz Park, Hollywood Park and Regatta Point Park.
2. That this motion be forwarded to the November 2, 2023, daytime meeting of Council for consideration and the bylaw receive three readings at that meeting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On July 6 and July 20, 2023, Council passed a series of motions to affect prohibition on overnight sheltering in Stadacona Park, Topaz Park, Hollywood Park and Regatta Point Park subject to the ability to house or better shelter those sheltering in Stadacona Park as of the morning of June 15, 2023, and in Topaz, Hollywood and Regatta Parks as of June 22, 2023.

Staff were directed to hire a third-party contractor to serve from July through December of 2023 as a Parks Relocation Coordinator (PRC) to oversee the transition out of sheltering from the named parks to areas not within City parks or on boulevards.

Pacifica Housing was hired as the third-party contractor and work began in August 2023. The City of Victoria provided 16 names of people who were sheltering in the 4 named parks on the specified dates.

As of October 25, 2023, everyone on the list has either received housing or better shelter, are no longer sheltering in the named parks, or have declined offers of housing assistance from the PRC. Therefore, the conditions set out in the Council member motions have been satisfied and bylaw No. 23-070: Parks Regulation Bylaw Amendment Bylaw (No. 18) can be brought forward to Council for consideration.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform Council that the efforts of the PRC to house or better shelter the 16 named individuals sheltering in Stadacona Park, Topaz Park, Hollywood Park and Regatta Point Park as of June 15, 2023 and June 22, 2023 were successful, that the criteria set out by Council in motions passed on July 6, 2023 have been satisfied and to recommend council bring forward bylaw No. 23-070: Parks Regulation Bylaw Amendment Bylaw (No. 18) to the November 2, 2023 Council meeting for consideration.

BACKGROUND

On July 6, 2023, Council passed motions to prohibit sheltering, in Stadacona Park, Topaz Park, Hollywood Park and Regatta Point Park subject to the ability to house or better shelter those sheltering in Stadacona Park as of the morning of June 15, 2023, and in Topaz, Hollywood and Regatta Parks as of June 22, 2023.

On July 6, 2023, Council passed the following motions:

Proposed Parks Regulation Bylaw Amendments

That Council direct staff to add Stadacona Park to the list of prohibited parks for sheltering, by 1 November 2023, subject to the ability to house or better shelter those sheltering in the park as of the morning of 15 June 2023.

Council Member Motion: Three Parks Without Overnight Sheltering

That Council direct staff to instruct the City Solicitor to bring forward bylaw amendments necessary to prohibit overnight sheltering at all times in Topaz Park, Hollywood Park and Regatta Point Park, by 1 September 2023, subject to ability to house or better shelter those sheltering in these parks as of 22 June 2023.

That staff dedicate up to \$25,000 from the funds set aside earlier this year for homelessness-related purposes to hire a third-party contractor to serve from July through December of 2023 as a Parks Relocation Coordinator and oversee the transitions out of sheltering at Topaz, Regatta Landing, Stadacona, and Hollywood Parks to areas that are not within city parks or on boulevards.

That council direct staff to identify and explore designated spaces to use as an alternative to sheltering in parks to support the upcoming closures of Topaz, Regatta, Hollywood, and Stadacona Parks

The bylaw amendments to implement the July 6, 2023, motions to prohibit overnight sheltering in these 4 parks were brought to the July 20, 2023, daytime Council meeting, however, it was referred to staff to report back on the implications of adopting the bylaw.

Pacifica Housing was contracted by the City of Victoria to act as the PRC to assist 16 named individuals sheltering in Stadacona Park, Topaz Park, Hollywood Park and Regatta Point Park on specified dates to transition into housing or better shelter. If that could be accomplished by November 1, 2023, then the City Solicitor was directed to bring forward bylaw amendments necessary to prohibit overnight sheltering in those parks at all times.

The PRC added another 9 individuals from two additional Parks (Oaklands and Vic West) to form a client base of 25 unhoused individuals to match their client/staff ratio.

Since 1988, Pacifica Housing Advisory Association (Pacifica Housing) has successfully developed and/or operated dozens of projects along the housing continuum, with the key purpose of providing equitable housing and support services for people at multiple entry points in Greater Victoria and Nanaimo.

They develop community-based projects that meet people where they are at, helping those who are marginalized exit the cycle of homelessness. Their support services include their Streets to Homes (S2H) program, a Community Services team that supports upwards of 500+ individuals in the private market with rent supplements, non-clinical supports, and connections to individualized services, and Indigenous Outreach services that provide culturally appropriate client services and supports to the urban Indigenous community.

Through their Victoria Downtown Outreach and Housing Resource Services (DOHRS) program, which provides drop-in advocacy, housing, and financial navigation services for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness, those in need of housing stability have a place to go for assistance.

Their housing and support services are accessible to all people, regardless of ethno-cultural background, religious beliefs, disability, mental health status, gender identity or sexual orientation. Pacifica Housing has extensive experience supporting vulnerable populations, including 2SLGBT2QIA+, Indigenous populations, seniors, those who struggle with substance misuse disorder and those affected by domestic violence and physical and/or mental health challenges. With programs and services delivered across the Greater Victoria region and Nanaimo, and numerous partners, such as BC Housing, Island Health, Reaching Home via the Government of Canada, the Capital Regional District (CRD), City of Victoria and Community Living BC, Pacifica Housing is ideally suited to provide encampment outreach in the City of Victoria with a housing focus.

While there are many different types of outreach services, encampment outreach with a housing focus is a systematic approach whereby assessments and referrals are primarily related to finding suitable housing for vulnerable individuals, while connecting them to the supports and resources needed to maintain long term stability.

Individuals living in encampments need a variety of basic resources to subsist, and those resources are available through other organizations. As the PRC, Pacifica Housing focuses on housing.

The Parks Relocation Coordinator will continue doing work until their contract expires on December 31, 2023.

Additionally, on October 19, 2023, in daytime Council, a motion was passed to allocate, at the discretion of the City Manager, a portion of available funds set aside for homelessness in the 2023 budget towards extending the contract of the Parks Relocation Coordinators to continue their work in all parks.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Option 1 – Bring forward bylaw amendments (Recommended)

1. That Council bring forward bylaw No. 23-070: Parks Regulation Bylaw Amendment Bylaw (No. 18) necessary to prohibit sheltering in Stadacona Park, Topaz Park, Hollywood Park and Regatta Point Park for consideration.
2. That this motion be forwarded to the November 2, 2023, daytime meeting of Council and that at this meeting, Council consider giving three readings of bylaw No. 23-070: Parks Regulation Bylaw Amendment Bylaw (No. 18).

Option 2 – Do not bring forward bylaw amendments (Not Recommended)

Council can choose not to bring forward to the November 2, 2023, daytime Council meeting, bylaw amendments necessary to prohibit sheltering in Stadacona Park, Topaz Park, Hollywood Park and Regatta Point Park. However, additional delay in considering these bylaw amendments will result in a further delay from the intended November 1, 2023, target set by Council.

CONCLUSIONS

The criteria set by Council member motions to prohibit sheltering in Stadacona Park, Topaz Park, Hollywood Park and Regatta Point Park by November 1, 2023, has been satisfied. If Council gives three readings of bylaw No. 23-070: Parks Regulation Bylaw Amendment Bylaw (No. 18) at the November 2, 2023, daytime council meeting, the bylaw can be adopted at the next meeting on November 9, 2023, and overnight sheltering in those parks would be prohibited effective as of that date.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Perkins
Director of Bylaw and Licencing Services

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager