

Municipal Update: Helping address homelessness in the Halifax region

Date of issue: August 4, 2022

The Halifax Regional Municipality's priority has been, and continues to be, treating those experiencing homelessness with dignity – and continuing to work with community partners to find ways to provide support to them within our organization's capacity and scope. The following is an update on ongoing efforts to help address homelessness in our region.

Designated Outdoor Sheltering Locations

As of 11 a.m., August 3, 2022, the four designated outdoor sheltering locations were occupied as follows:

1. **Barrington Street Green Space, Halifax** – Nine tents on site; capacity for eleven more tents
2. **Lower Flinn Park, Halifax** – one tent on site; capacity for three more tents
3. **Green Road Park, Dartmouth** – no tents on site; capacity for eight tents
4. **Geary Street Green Space, Dartmouth** – three tents and three structures on site; the location is fully occupied

Signage & Site Rules

- Work started on July 22, 2022, to install signage at each of the four locations, including site layouts and the rules and regulations that apply to everyone, such as [By-Law P-600 – Respecting Municipal Parks](#), [By-Law N-200 – Respecting Noise](#), and [By-Law O-109 – Respecting Open Air Burning](#). It is anticipated that this will be completed by mid-August.

Water

- Weekly water deliveries for each of the four locations commenced on July 21, 2022. Feedback from those sheltering in the designated locations will inform adjustment to frequency of deliveries moving forward.

Incident at Green Road Park

- The municipality is aware of a tent that was damaged by fire at the Green Road designated outdoor sheltering location during the evening of August 1, 2022. Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency was called to the scene to extinguish the fire and the individual who had been sheltering at that location was not hurt in the incident. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

Special Meeting of Regional Council

- A Special Meeting of Regional Council was held on Tuesday, August 2, 2022. Municipal staff presented an update regarding the status of municipal efforts to support those experiencing homelessness in our community. See [staff presentation](#) and [video recording of meeting](#), posted to the municipal website.
- The presentation included detailed information about the ongoing housing crisis in the Halifax region; the municipality's ongoing efforts to help address homelessness; an update on the situation at Meagher Park, including continued health and safety concerns; some outcomes of the civilian-led approach; and next steps.

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Meagher Park

- As outlined in the staff presentation at the Special Regional Council meeting, extensive efforts over the past several weeks through a civilian-led engagement approach to close Meager Park have been exhausted. The Council-endorsed response plan now indicates Halifax Regional Police (HRP) may be asked to assist in vacating the park.
- On August 3, 2022, the Executive Director of Parks and Recreation submitted an [official request](#) to the Chief of Police for HRP's assistance.
- The municipality encourages those sheltering in Meagher Park to accept offers of support from Street Navigators and service providers. Those interested in locating to one of the designated outdoor sheltering locations will be provided assistance with transportation by the municipality, as requested.
- As mentioned in previous updates, some advocates and protesters have indicated their intention to engage in conflict should the municipality enforce the July 5, 2022, notice to vacate and remove individuals from the park.
- Enforcement actions are now an operational matter for HRP. The municipality will continue to work to support those sheltering in the park and encourage them transition to a designated outdoor sheltering location – if offers by the province or service providers for temporary housing are either not available or would not / could not be accepted.
- Municipal administration does not have authority to direct police-related operations. As explained by the Chief of Police during the Special Meeting of Regional Council, HRP will take a measured approach that includes assessing the situation, developing a plan and taking steps that ensure public safety remains paramount. Additional questions about a possible police-led operation need to be referred to HRP.

Incident at Meagher Park

- At approximately 6:00 p.m. on August 3, 2022, Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency (HRFE) firefighters arrived at Meagher Park in response to a call about a reported bonfire. Upon arrival, the firefighters saw a fire in a pit that consisted of construction debris and plastic tarps. The firefighters reminded the approximately four individuals in the park that there is currently a provincial fire ban in place and directed that the fire be extinguished. The individuals refused to extinguish the fire and would not allow the firefighters access to extinguish the fire.
- At this point, the firefighters requested assistance from Halifax Regional Police (HRP). Upon arrival, HRP officers spoke to those individuals in the park and assisted the firefighters with gaining access to the fire. The firefighters quickly extinguished the fire at approximately 6:15 p.m. and departed the park without further incident.

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Additional background

- Further to the [municipal statement on July 5, 2022](#), and the municipal updates issued on [July 15, 2022](#), [July 22, 2022](#), and [July 27, 2022](#), the municipality set July 17, 2022, as the date for those who had been sheltering in Meagher Park to transition to a designated outdoor sheltering location – if offers by the province or service providers for temporary housing were either not available or would not / could not be accepted.
- The health and safety conditions in the park continue to place those sheltering in this location in an increasingly vulnerable situation. The designated outdoor sheltering locations provide a safer alternative with access to additional supports and services.
- In the lead up to, and throughout, the transition period which ended on July 17, 2022, municipal staff have visited the park regularly to perform wellness checks with those who remain onsite, connect them with service providers, inform them of the closure of the park and explain the services that are available at each of the four designated outdoor sheltering locations.
- Various groups have been protesting at Meagher Park since July 17, 2022, and municipal staff have been in contact with representatives from some of these groups to ensure service providers have unimpeded access to the park to support those experiencing homelessness. Staff have spoken with individuals who have indicated association with Halifax Mutual Aid; Permanent, Accessible, Dignified and Safe (PADS) Community Network; and Nova Scotians United. Staff are also aware that members of the Freedom Convoy have been on site.
- Municipal efforts remain focused on assisting those who are experiencing homelessness and encouraging those who remain in the park to vacate the site and accept alternative options, including the support and services currently provided at the designated outdoor sheltering locations.
- As mentioned previously, if someone refuses to leave the park, for whatever reason, and a negotiated settlement is not successful, the response plan may include requesting the assistance of Halifax Regional Police, as a last resort. Failure to comply with the closure of the park is an offence under the Municipal Parks Bylaw and the *Protection of Property Act, R.S.N.S., 1989*.
- Once vacated, the municipality will be fencing Meagher Park so that reconstruction work can be completed – returning the park to its original state. Over the coming months, planned work includes assessing the condition of the park, cleaning the area and resodding the grass.

For more information about ongoing efforts by the municipality to help address homelessness in our region visit halifax.ca/addressinghomelessness.