



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 2
Halifax Regional Council
January 25, 2022

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: January 17, 2022

SUBJECT: Emergency Supportive Housing and Shelter Accommodation update –
January 2022

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

August 31, 2021 Regional Council motion (item 14.1):

Moved by Mayor Savage, seconded by Councillor Mason.

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to implement a range of emergency supportive housing and emergency shelter accommodations for those who are unhoused in collaboration with and based on feedback from community-based social services providers and the Province of Nova Scotia to address immediate and emergent needs including measures such as the fit-up of spaces for temporary accommodations, renting of hotel and other spaces and further, and to coordinate and collaborate with community-based social services providers and the Province of Nova Scotia in that respect;

Direct that the Chief Administrative Officer be authorized to spend up to \$500,000 from Fiscal Services in respect of addressing these needs, and report on the use of said funds through monthly public updates as an information report at Regional Council meetings until the end of the fiscal year and then quarterly at a minimum; and,

Further direct the Chief Administrative Officer to work with Department of Community Services and community service providers on a needs-analysis including determining how many people are unhoused, how many of them are currently tenting or occupying other forms of shelter within parks and other public lands in Halifax Regional Municipality and how many can be accommodated in a safer manner.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

November 9, 2021 Regional Council motion (Item 15.1.9)

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Blackburn

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct that the Chief Administrative Officer be authorized to spend up to \$3.2 million from Fiscal Services to purchase, install and maintain modular units at two sites and to address suitable temporary housing to address needs of unhoused residents. Regular updates to Regional Council will occur monthly until the end of the fiscal year and then quarterly at minimum.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

January 11, 2022 Regional Council motion (Item15.1.4)

MOVED by Councillor Cuttell, seconded by Councillor Kent

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct that the Chief Administrative Officer be authorized to spend up to an additional \$1,200,000 from Fiscal Services to purchase and install modular units at two sites and to address suitable temporary housing to address needs of unhoused residents.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39 provides:

- 7A The purposes of the Municipality are to
- ...
- (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and
 - (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

BACKGROUND

Halifax is in an emergency shelter crisis on top of a housing crisis. The city is growing at an unprecedented rate and growing rates of homelessness is one result. There are approximately 200 shelter beds in Halifax and over 450 people experiencing homelessness, a rate of one shelter bed for every 2.5 people experiencing homelessness on any given night. In addition, the city's rental vacancy rate is below 1%, the minimum wage is \$13.40 and the average cost of a 1-bedroom apartment is \$1600. While all orders of government continue to invest in rapidly built new housing, including supportive housing options, the homelessness crisis continues to persist. New pathways to ensure access to emergency shelter are needed until an adequate amount of deeply affordable housing, as well as supportive housing, is made available.

As noted in the Origin section, in August Halifax Regional Council identified \$500,000 for use in addressing urgent and emergency needs related to homelessness and directed the Chief Administrative Officer to work with the Province of Nova Scotia and community partners to explore use of this funding. On November 9, 2021 Regional Council directed that the Chief Administrative Officer be authorized to spend up to an additional \$3.2 million for this purpose and on January 11, 2022 Regional Council approved another \$1.2 million. The majority of this additional \$4.4 million was required to complete installation of modular units on sites in Dartmouth and Halifax.

The situation with homelessness is dynamic and changes frequently. Therefore, monthly updates provided to Regional Council will be reflective of a specific period, up to the point of having a report prepared in time for review and distribution on the Council agenda. This is the fifth monthly update report requested by Council and covers the period up to and including January 17, 2022.

DISCUSSION

Modular Units

Work on the location at Flotilla Lane / Alderney Drive / Church Street in Dartmouth for modular units to accommodate clients of the Out of the Cold shelter has been substantially completed. Occupancy permits were received for the 4 modular sleeping units (total capacity 24 persons) on January 13 and residents moved in on January 16. Construction and modification of the modular unit to accommodate the two barrier-free bedrooms (with total capacity for two individuals) and single washroom is anticipated to be ready for occupancy by late January. Modification of the modular unit to accommodate the commercial kitchen has been impacted by supply chain issues and completion of this work is expected by late February.

The Municipality has signed a license agreement with the Province of Nova Scotia, which is responsible for determining placement of individuals and providing wrap-around services onsite through its service provider, Out of the Cold. HRM is purchasing the units, providing all normal municipal services (i.e. garbage pick-up, snow removal, etc.), and covering the cost of utilities and maintenance on site. Most individuals who have been residing at the Gray Arena, which has been used as a temporary shelter for the past several months, have moved to the Dartmouth modular site. Alternate accommodations have been offered by the province to those individuals at the arena who did not relocate. The process has begun to return the arena to its original purpose.

With the Dartmouth site now completed, the municipality has shifted focus to completing the Halifax modular unit site on a portion of the parking area of the Centennial Pool accessed from Cogswell Street. Key factors in helping choose this location include but are not limited to the property being owned by the municipality, meeting the applicable zoning requirements, and being located within reasonable proximity to important supports and services that occupants may need, including transit.

Six modular units, an accessible unit, and support units (for a total of nine units) will be installed at this site. The units are expected to accommodate 38 individuals, based on single occupancy. A previous update indicated that this site could accommodate 44 people, but this number was based on double occupancy to accommodate couples in certain rooms.

Municipal staff are proceeding with design and construction documents and the projected start of the installation in Halifax is late January 2022. It is anticipated the Halifax shelter will be ready for occupancy by mid-March 2022. As with the Dartmouth site, exact timing for occupancy is dependent upon the province, which is responsible for determining placement of individuals and providing wrap-around services onsite through a contracted service provider.

As noted in the January 11 report to Regional Council, estimated costs to purchase and maintain the modular units for the remainder of this year are as follows:

- Dartmouth site purchase and installation is estimated at \$1,834,600, with anticipated operating costs of \$15,000 in 2021/22.
- Halifax site purchase and installation is estimated at \$2,460,578, with anticipated operating costs of \$5,500 in 2021/22.

The anticipated costs identified with the construction of both sites have increased due to unforeseen circumstances. Typically, the management of a capital construction project includes sufficient time for the development of a well-defined scope of work that assists with accurate budgeting and cost estimates. Due to the unique nature and urgency of this project, risks associated with unknown issues, program requirements and other variables have had an impact on the budget and schedule for both projects.

Partnerships

An ongoing priority for the municipality and its partners is to work with persons sleeping outdoors to try to identify suitable temporary housing options. Staff from the municipality and partner organizations are making best efforts to visit these sites regularly and, in coordination with multiple service providers, hotel rooms and shelter placement has been occurring regularly. Staff are aware of more than 20 locations at which people are sleeping outside. This number may not be accurate because it is arrived at via a number of different sources, including the municipal 311 system. In addition, due to the transitory nature of residents sleeping outside, the number of sites and/or individuals onsite can vary daily.

The municipality has provided \$70,000 to a coalition of 11 community service providers (COPSO) for use as crisis funding for hotel stays to support those experiencing homelessness. This funding has created a rapid support model to provide immediate access to safe, indoor space via hotel accommodation - essentially a scattered site emergency bed program run collaboratively by community agencies. The range of members in the coalition enables broad access to support from across the system (youth, families, men, women, domestic violence survivors, etc.).

Agencies can refer clients to the COPSO funding as a last resort and each person referred must be attached to a support worker as a condition of acceptance. Currently, these agencies are providing support to people staying in hotels at no additional cost. Staff are working toward providing a further allocation to COPSO from the crisis accommodation funding approved by Regional Council. Between September and the end of first week of January, 107 people have accessed emergency shelter via this funding, for a total of 2,496 nights in hotel rooms.

In addition, municipal staff are working closely with provincial colleagues to support the province in its role as the lead in addressing homelessness. Regular meetings are occurring with provincial staff to better combine resources, clarify roles and responsibilities, and conduct joint planning. Most recently, the province and municipality signed a licence agreement regarding operation of the Dartmouth modular site. It is expected that homelessness will continue to be a significant social issue and the municipality will maintain some role in providing facilitation for those sleeping in parks and other locations and supporting the province in delivering on its mandate.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Of the \$4,900,000 approved by Regional Council, total expenditures as of January 16 were \$1,230,424. Most of this spending is for purchase and installation of the modular units. Additional costs include the funding provided to COPSO, costs for short-term hotel stays funded directly by the municipality, and security, maintenance, and supplies at Gray Arena.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In addition to the Province, staff have contact and/or meet regularly with several community-based service providers. COPSO agency members include: Adsum for Women and Children (Trustee), Coverdale Courtwork Society, the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland NS, John Howard Society, Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, North End Community Health Centre / MOSH Housing First, Out of the Cold Community Association, Phoenix Youth Programs, Shelter Nova Scotia, Welcome Housing, and the YWCA. Bryony House is not a member but refers people as needed. In addition, the Outreach Street Navigators and Mainline have been engaged as required.

ATTACHMENTS

No attachments.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Paul Johnston, Managing Director, Government Relations & External Affairs,
902.240.2759
