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To: "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"

CC: "City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL"
"Singh, Sandra" <Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca>

Date: 7/25/2019 2:31:37 PM

Subject: Oppenheimer Messaging

Attachments: Oppenheimer messaging - Mayor and Council - July 22.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

As per our in-camera briefing yesterday on Oppenheimer Park, attached are some possible responses for you to consider that would enable you to respond to questions without divulging in-camera information.

If you have any challenges answering specific questions, please do not hesitate to refer to Sandra Singh at sandra.singh@vancouver.ca or 604-353-1857 and we can either respond or assist in crafting a response.

Best,
Sadhu

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Pronouns: he, him, his



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples.

Councillor Briefing Note
Oppenheimer Park
Last updated: July 22, 2019

KEY MESSAGES (intended for public use if asked, not proactively)

- The City acknowledges the fundamental challenges of individuals who are experiencing homelessness and sleeping in Oppenheimer Park.
- The safety of the people sleeping in the park is our priority.
- The City's Homelessness Services Outreach Team visits the park daily, working with the people who are sleeping in tents overnight to connect them with important health, housing and other services.
- While the City, Park Board and Vancouver Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) continue to take actions to improve safety in the park, we have ongoing serious concerns regarding this encampment given the likelihood of serious health and safety incidents.
- The City is also aware of the critical role that this park plays as one of the only open public and green spaces where Downtown Eastside residents can gather. We have heard concerns from community members who rely on this park for social, recreational, cultural and nutritional programming, including families who use the park and playground.
- After monitoring the changing conditions and the impacts on services, the City has determined that the staff team who work out of the Field House in Oppenheimer Park are no longer able to effectively fulfill their social and recreational programming mandate out of the Field House. As a result, Field House staff have been temporarily relocated to Carnegie Community Centre to deliver programming and services from the Centre and other locations in the Downtown Eastside.
- This decision has been contemplated for some time as the situation at the park has evolved. Staff have been significantly diverted from regular programming to assist with things like incident de-escalation and intervention, cleaning up debris left by campers, and other non-community programming related activities.
- We are committed to serving the community members who rely on the Field House for their social and recreational connections and look forward to returning when our staff are able to carry out their regular programming.
- A Fire Chief's order has been in place in the park for a few months and VFRS continue to be on site enforcing the Order. The Fire Chief's order is applicable to all individuals in the park and sets out a number of specific fire and life safety requirements. However, we are growing increasingly worried as we continue to see non-compliance with the Fire Chief's order.
- The City, Park Board and VFRS will continue to work in the park to support individuals and will continue to work with partners such as BCH to connect them to services and housing, where available.

FAQ

Q: How many people are currently sleeping in Oppenheimer Park?

A: There are currently more than 100 tents in the park, with some tents being used to store belongings.

Q: What is the City doing to support campers in Oppenheimer Park?

A: The City's Homelessness Services Outreach Team visits the park daily, working with the people who are sleeping in tents overnight to connect them with important health, housing and other services.

The City, Park Board and VFRS will continue to work in the park to support individuals and will continue to work with partners such as BCH to connect them to services and housing, where available.

City staff, along with the Vancouver Police Department are supporting VFRS in enforcing a Fire Chief's order which has been in place in the park for a few months. The order is applicable to all individuals in the park and sets out a number of specific fire and life safety requirements. However, we are growing increasingly worried as we continue to see non-compliance with the Fire Chief's order and other concerning life-safety incidents.

Q: What is the next step for the City in managing the encampment at Oppenheimer Park?

A: The City, Park Board and VFRS will continue to support people sleeping in the park, with a focus on safety, and work with partners to help individuals connect to services, income, and housing, where available.

Q: What about community events planned in the park this summer?

A: We understand many important community festivals and gatherings are planned throughout the summer in Oppenheimer Park, and the City and Park Board staff will continue to work closely with event organizers to accommodate as many events as possible.

Q: Why is the Field House closed?

A: After monitoring the changing conditions and the impacts on services, the City has determined that the staff team who work out of the Field House in Oppenheimer Park are no longer able to effectively fulfill their social and recreational programming mandate out of the Field House. As a result, Field House staff have been temporarily relocated to Carnegie Community Centre to deliver programming and services from the Centre and other locations in the Downtown Eastside.

Q: How long will the Field House be closed for?

A: The Field House will remain closed until such time as we can resume the effective delivery of social and recreational programming at that location. The City will monitor the situation on a daily basis and adjust and review our approach as the situation evolves.

Q: If someone is looking for a service usually provided out of the Field House, who can they contact?

A: More information will be available soon on where services have been relocated to, in the meantime, people can visit Carnegie Centre for more information.

We remain committed to serving the Downtown Eastside community through recreation, social, cultural, and nutrition programs and services and our Field House staff team will come together to build creative, community based programming during this temporary relocation.

Q: Will the City continue other services in Oppenheimer Park?

A: All other regular City services to support services in the park, including litter pick up, washrooms, facilities support, outreach services, etc. will continue.

Q. Will the City reopen services at the park?

A: Yes, we are committed to serving the community members who rely on the Oppenheimer Park Field House for their social and recreational connections and look forward to returning when our staff are able to carry out their regular programming.

Q: What can I do if I'm concerned about someone experiencing homelessness?

A: If you're concerned about someone who is experiencing homelessness you can contact the City's Homelessness Services Outreach Team at 604-655-3318 or by calling 3-1-1. The team links people to available social, health and housing services and provides assistance in a non-judgmental, supportive way.