



TOWN OF GIBSONS

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August 2018: Talk of the Town by Mayor Wayne Rowe

It's easy to forget in these idyllic summer months that not everyone has access to the basic creature comforts that most of us take for granted. You may have seen in recent reports by local media, for example, that a group of homeless people have been camping at the Town of Gibsons' Parks yard for the past few weeks.

Homelessness within our Town's boundaries became a more visible issue in January, prompting the set up a cold weather shelter, which remained open until the end of March and provided shelter for several individuals.

Now, we are working to address the situation of the folks camping at the Parks Yard by installing a port-a-potty at the site, conducting regular inspections to ensure the property remains clean, and working to connect the camp residents with relevant resources available through organizations such as Vancouver Coastal Health, RainCity Housing, the faith community and the RCMP.

For the long-term, however, Council and staff have been working to advance a number of affordable housing projects within Gibsons, which could help alleviate some of the tremendous pressure we are seeing around the availability of reasonably priced housing, including rentals.

Most recently, Council passed a bylaw allowing the closure of a portion of Harmony Lane, so that the resulting lot may be used for a small affordable housing development. The project will be led by the Sunshine Coast Affordable Housing Society (SCAHS), which has been approved to lease the site for 99 years and to build a single-family dwelling with a secondary suite and garden suite on the property. Rental rates for the three units are expected to be set at approximately 25% below market value.

The Town is also working to secure the old RCMP property at 749 School Road under the *Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative* and to advance an affordable housing project on a 3-acre parcel off the Charman Creek Lands.

A recent World Café on the Charman Creek proposal was well attended, and sparked a productive conversation around how concerns from residents in nearby neighborhoods could be addressed through planning and design. An upcoming design charette will help flesh out some of those ideas.

It's gratifying to see the various community efforts being made to alleviate our housing challenges. The Town of Gibsons is already well-known for its seaside beauty, small-town charm and progressive asset management strategies. Let's also be recognized for our compassionate treatment of those who are the most vulnerable among us.

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"Nature is our most valuable asset"

