

Wetaskiwin City Council Allocates Funds to Open Emergency Shelter

For Immediate Release
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(Wetaskiwin, Alberta) – At their regular November 12, 2019 meeting, Wetaskiwin City Council directed that Administration take immediate steps to open an emergency shelter at the Civic building again. A financial commitment of up to \$65,000 was approved to cover the shelter's operational costs until March 31, 2020.

Two organizations—Hope Mission and Lighthouse Church—supplied City Council with quotes on the anticipated cost of running the emergency shelter. Due to the cold weather, City Administration will give preference to the organization that can have the shelter up and running in the shortest time frame.

"While setting up an emergency shelter again for our vulnerable population is a great first step, it remains just that—a first step," said Mayor Tyler Gandam. "The City will continue to seek financial support from the provincial government, as well as from neighbouring communities."

Initially opened on February 5, 2019, the emergency shelter's three-month-long operation saw a large decrease in the number of calls for service reported by the RCMP. A significant reduction in the volume of local hospital visits throughout the shelter's operation was also reported by Alberta Health Services.

"Council recognizes there were also challenges experienced by the greater community while the shelter was open, including increased loitering and public intoxication in Wetaskiwin's downtown core," said Mayor Gandam. "Our commitment to keeping Wetaskiwin a secure, connected, and inclusive community remains a priority, and we will be working with those impacted by the location of the shelter."

City Administration was also directed by Council to examine broader, long-term solutions for addressing community issues such as homelessness, mental health, and addictions. A full report is expected to be brought before Wetaskiwin City Council by April 27, 2020. Updates will be posted at www.wetaskiwin.ca.

About the City of Wetaskiwin

Wetaskiwin is a secure, connected, and inclusive community home to a diverse population of nearly 13,000 people. Located only 30 minutes south of the Edmonton International Airport, the City of Wetaskiwin provides a high quality of life through ample greenspace and parks, quality recreation opportunities, and a modernized, business-friendly downtown.

For more information please contact:

Rachelle Kuzyk

Director of Community Services

780.361.4458