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TO: Deputy Mayor Hale and Assembly Committee of the Whole

DATE: April 15, 2024

FROM: Robert Barr, Deputy City Manager

RE: Cold Weather Emergency Shelter and Mill Campground Update

Two other recent memos on this topic provide additional context:

- March 11, Committee of the Whole<sup>1</sup>
- April 1, Regular Assembly<sup>2</sup>

#### Cold Weather Emergency Shelter (CWES)

Outside businesses in the Rock Dump area, feedback from providers and emergency responders has generally been positive about this program as compared to last year. The Assembly received an update from St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) executive director Dave Ringle recently. A key point in that update is that SVdP, with other partner providers, have been focused on finding housing for the most vulnerable CWES clients.

For next year, we currently plan to replicate the program from this year with the following changes and notes:

- We will start and complete a project this construction season to plumb and install interior restrooms – this should help significantly with staff safety and behavioral / substance-use management next year.
- We understand and accept that staff capacity continues to be the major risk factor to operating the CWES. CBJ staff will work with SVdP to mitigate this.

#### Campground

At our last meeting, we learned of a significant construction project adjacent to the 100 Mill St. site that may be incompatible with a campground. We have not had time to dive into the details around compatibility. Since our last meeting, we received an extremely high cost estimate – far above our assumptions – to move the existing equipment from the 100 Mill St. site to a different location. We are waiting for another estimate.

We've continued discussions with the Rock Dump area business community as well as internally and with partner organizations. Frankly, there continue to be no good options.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://bit.ly/3x76JRV>

<sup>2</sup> <https://bit.ly/3vOpGsk>

- Little Rock Dump (LRD)
  - Pros: Not near a neighborhood or business area. Very limited space for vehicles to congregate. Emergency access is good.
  - Cons: Invisible – no reason to expect we would see differences in behavior compared to last year. In some cases, it is likely better for campers to be dispersed. Transportation costs would be extremely high.
- Former Mill Campground
  - Pros: Same as last year, camper familiarity
  - Cons: Significant neighborhood concerns. Invisible – same as LRD. Access is poor.
- Other areas – other areas are possible, but not in a short time horizon.

At this time, staff recommends not designating any site as a campground which will result in dispersed camping. In any situation, staff will continue to work with the provider community to maintain awareness and provide connections to resources. The staff recommendation at this point, which is generally shared by the provider community, is that the best near-term solution is to:

- Continue to work to connect individuals to housing solutions
- Continue to meet on this topic to maintain awareness and evaluate options
- Address dispersed camping as it occurs through best practices: 1) connection to housing resources whenever possible, 2) general acceptance/allowance of campsites when minimally impactful, 3) abatement of campsites when significantly impactful

### **Recommendation**

Vote down Ordinance 2024-14, A Noncode Ordinance Authorizing a Thane Road Campground at 100 Mill Street

Forward to the Assembly for introduction on April 29 Ordinance 2024-18, A Noncode Ordinance Authorizing a Designated Campground Primarily for People Experiencing Homelessness as an Essential Public Facility and Exempting it from the Requirements and Prohibitions of Title 49.

*(adoption of Ordinance 2024-14 means dispersed camping until such time that the Assembly designates a location by resolution)*