



REPORT

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Meeting Date: February 12, 2020
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TO: Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities

FROM: General Manager of Real Estate and Facilities Management in consultation with the General Managers of Engineering Services and Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT: Aquatic Environments: Mobile Pump-out Service Delivery

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT a mobile sewage pump-out service be delivered in False Creek for the 2020 to 2024 boating seasons, inclusive as described in this report.
- B. THAT staff provide annual updates to Council on service performance as part of the City's False Creek Water Quality Improvement Initiative.

REPORT SUMMARY

In 2019, Council approved in principle the delivery of a mobile sewage pump-out service for False Creek for a five (5) year term starting in 2020 with the understanding that staff would report back on a recommended funding option. This report responds to this request and recommends that the five (5) year mobile sewage pump-out service be approved with funding provided by the sewer utility. Each year, staff will report service results to Council as part of the City's False Creek Water Quality Improvement Initiative annual reporting. Budget approval will occur as part of the City's regular annual process. Prior to the end of the fifth year of service, staff will report back to Council with a full review of the overall service results over the five (5) year period and provide recommendations for next steps.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

At their regular meeting of the Standing Committee of Council on City Finance and Services, held on Wednesday, February 13, 2019 (RTS 12909), Council adopted the following recommendations¹:

- A. THAT Council direct the General Manager of Real Estate and Facilities Management to extend the pilot mobile sewage pump-out service in False Creek for the 2019 boating season.
- B. THAT Council support, in principle, the delivery of a mobile sewage pump-out service in False Creek for the 2020 to 2024 boating seasons, inclusive, and that staff report back with details on a recommended funding option to support this five-year service.
- C. THAT Council direct staff to come back in Q3 of 2019 with recommendations of the Waterfront Initiative to create an action plan to address water quality issues.

This report addresses Recommendations A and B. Recommendation C is being addressed in a separate report (RTS 13050).

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

REPORT

Background

First launched as a pilot program in 2017, the City's mobile sewage pump-out service provides recreational and live-aboard boaters with an easy and convenient method to be responsible with the sewage contents of their vessels and prevent such waste from being directly discharged into the environment. The service is offered seasonally, during high boating season in False Creek.

In accordance with Council direction, the pilot program was extended on an annual basis each year since its launch in 2017. Each year, service improvements have been made resulting in extended service periods, reduction in costs per volume of sewage pumped, more users using the service, and most importantly, higher volumes of sewage being serviced and not ending up in False Creek.

Annual updates on the performance of the mobile service have been provided to Council, which have included feedback received from marinas and boaters. A summary of annual service metrics for 2017 through 2019 is provided in **Appendix A**.

In 2019, Council endorsed, in principle, the recommendation to provide mobile pump-out service over a five (5) year term subject to details being provided on a recommended funding option.

¹ <https://council.vancouver.ca/20190213/documents/cfsc20190213min.pdf>

Recommended Funding Source

The budget for delivery of the mobile pump-out service from 2020-2024 has been estimated to be \$100,000 per year. This level of investment includes resources to deliver the service at levels provided in 2019. Specifically, this would mean the service would be provided during the peak boating season, approximately from mid-May to the end of September, and be available from 12- 5 pm, four days a week (i.e., Thursday, Friday, Sunday and Monday).

Three alternative funding source options were identified and evaluated against two key objectives:

- 1) Achieving desired outcome - reducing illegal discharges by boaters by maximizing access to pump-out facilities; and
- 2) Delivering service in a cost-effective and equitable manner.

Each of the funding options are discussed below:

1. Pay at the Pump (*not recommended*)

A user-pay system could be implemented whereby customers using the pump-out service would pay at the time of service. The advantage of this approach is that the users of the service would be responsible for the sewage collection costs. However, this option is not being recommended given that it is likely to be less effective in achieving the desired outcome of preventing illegal discharges and reducing microbial inputs. This assessment is based on survey input from boaters and marina operators who have indicated that boaters are less likely to use the service if payment is required at the time of service;

2. Increased Marina Business License Fees (*not recommended*)

Consideration was also given to increasing business licensing fees for marinas in False Creek as a source of funding. It is envisioned that these fees would be passed on to the marina users. This approach to user pay would not discourage usage of the service in the same way as the pay at the pump model above. However, this option presents two key challenges. First, not all service users would be captured as not all marinas require a business license and not all users belong to a False Creek marina. Second, marinas have already invested into implementing and maintaining pump-out infrastructure and services as required under the City's *Health By-law*; and

3. Sewer Utility (*recommended*)

The sewer utility is the current source of funding for mobile pump-out service and is being recommended to be continued as the source of funding to support the five (5) year program (i.e. 2020-2024 inclusive). The sewer utility is the money raised by all property owners that are subject to the fee charged under Part III of the Sewer and Watercourse By-law. This option would not be based on a user-pay approach. However, funding through the sewer utility supports the core objective of making the service as convenient and easy as possible; the key attributes identified by boaters and marina operators for encouraging usage and preventing illegal discharges. This approach is consistent with the funding approach for the publically accessible stationary pump-out services provided at civic marinas and incurs minimal administrative costs, enabling the vast majority of the budget to support direct service delivery.

In summary, staff is recommending the Sewer Utility option as the preferred funding option as it best encourages the overarching objective of the program to reduce illegal discharges and delivers service in a cost-effective manner. While costs of the service would not necessarily be

borne by direct users of the service, these costs are related to sewage treatment and are minimal. Furthermore, the mobile pump-out boat delivers important broader benefits to the community, namely raising awareness of marina water quality considerations and encouraging responsible practices community-wide.

Public/Civic Agency Input

User feedback regarding the mobile pump-out service remains very positive and continued operation of the service is strongly supported throughout the boating community. Many boaters have provided feedback that the service was “very important” as it provided a practical option, particularly for those who have challenges using existing stationary pump-out facilities as a result of vessel size, unfamiliarity with pump-out equipment, or other factors. Boaters also noted that the presence of the pump-out boat on the water served to increase general awareness of marine water quality issues and the importance of proper vessel sewage management.

Implications/Related Issues/Risk

Financial

The annual cost to deliver the mobile pump-out service at 2019 service levels is \$100,000. This report recommends that costs to support the five (5) year service be funded by the sewer utility. Funds to support the 2020 service have been incorporated as part of the 2020 sewer rates. Service delivery in future years would be subject to regular annual budget approval processes.

Delivery of service in 2020 would depend on the use of sewer utility as the source of funding. Action needed to implement alternative funding source options could be implemented in 2020 to support future years.

Human Resources/Labour Relations

There are no anticipated implications for human resources or labour relations.

Environmental

The recommendations of this report are directed towards improving marine water quality and environmental health, as well as the waterway use experiences of the community. The five-year delivery period will provide the opportunity for the City to revisit the cost/benefit ratio of this initiative to ensure that investments are being directed to areas of highest impact.

Legal

The Vancouver Charter authorizes Council to provide the pump-out service, and regulate in relation to sewage discharges.

CONCLUSION

Improving water quality in False Creek is a long-term endeavour, dependent upon a systematic effort across a suite of key action areas. One key area is improving sewage management by boaters. To encourage responsible sewage management, the City's introduced a mobile pump-

out pilot service in 2017. The pilot was well received by the boating and marina operator community and, over the course of three (3) years, provided service to over 800 users and resulted in the collection of 135,000 L of sewage. Service adjustments have been made each year in efforts of optimizing service delivery. These have reduced costs per pump-out significantly and resulted in greater pump-outs each year. With the completion of the pilot, it is being recommended that a five-year service program be advanced and funded by the sewer utility.

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Mobile Pump-Out Service in False Creek

Service Provision	2019	2018	2017
Operating Period	May 17, 2019 – October 11, 2019	June 1, 2018 – September 17, 2018	August 11, 2017 – October 14, 2017
Operating Days	4 days per week (Thurs, Fri, Sun, Mon)	5 days per week (Thurs, Fri, Sat, Sun, Mon)	4 days per week (Fri, Sat, Mon, Tues)
Number of Days in Service	78 days	79 days	37 days
Scheduling	Pre-booking or on-demand via phone, text, email or in-person; boat owner choice if they would like to be present	Pre-booking or on-demand via phone, text, email or in-person; boat owner choice if they would like to be present	Pre-booking or on-demand via phone, text, email or in-person; boat owner choice if they would like to be present
User Cost	No cost	No cost	No cost
Communications and Outreach to Promote the Service	Social media, email notifications to marina operators, meetings with marina operators, pump-out boat signage, word-of-mouth, posters at marinas	Social media, email notifications to marina operators, meetings with marina operators, pump-out boat signage, word-of-mouth, posters at marinas	Social media, email notifications to marina operators, meetings with marina operators, pump-out boat signage, word-of-mouth, media event
Service Utilization	2019	2018	2017
Total Number of Pump-outs Performed	931 (of which 398 were unique vessels)	561 (of which 261 were unique vessels)	169 (of which 112 were unique vessels)
Average Number of Pump-outs performed/day	12	7.1	4.6
Approximate Total Volume of Sewage Pumped	67,000 Litres	48,000 Litres	20,000 Litres
Peak Daily Usage	29 boats	18 boats	11 boats
Service Quality	2019	2018	2017
Service Satisfaction	Survey not completed in 2019 since user satisfaction was 100% in prior years.	100% of surveyed users reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service	100% of surveyed users reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service
Top Service Attributes Cited by Users	Cost, ease of booking, and getting a pump-out without moving boat	Cost, ease of booking, and getting a pump-out without moving boat	Convenience, ease of booking, and cost
Service Recommendation	Verbal feedback was extremely supportive of the service and its continued operation.	99% of surveyed users reported it was important for the service to be provided in 2019	100% of surveyed users reported it was important for the service to be provided in 2018