

CITY COUNCIL REPORT

DATE: March 23, 2020
TO: Mayor and Councilmembers
FROM: Kevin M. Lomeli, Fire Chief
CC: Jerene Watson, City Manager, Dawn Prince, Deputy City Manager;
Department Directors
SUBJECT: PORT-A-POTTIES IN PARKS

In response to an inquiry from Councilmember Huish about accommodating needs of the homeless and other public who may are now unable to use park restrooms, this report provides staff recommendation.

DISCUSSION:

The recent closure of public restrooms in the City of Douglas Parks has brought up the question, can we place port-a-potties in the parks?

After much consideration and discussion among the team, it was decided that allowing temporary port-a-potties would increase the risk of public exposure. Closure of the public restrooms at our parks was in the best interest of our citizens. We cannot be certain that proper hygiene practices are being followed and the risk of cross contamination from one citizen to another is a major concern. During normal park opening hours, restrooms at our parks are cleaned twice a day. Increasing any restroom cleanings not only increases employee exposure but we are also increasing the use rate of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies which are both in short supply worldwide. We must take every precaution in order to protect our employees and citizens.

The latest reports from the CDC state that although not the primary route of transmission, COVID-19 spreads by means of contact. Through respiratory droplets the virus can be found on objects for a unknown period of time. High traffic areas in the public create a greater risk of cross contamination when we cannot be sure that proper hygiene is being practiced. This is the primary reason why the public restrooms in our parks have been closed.

RECOMMENDATION:

Substituting restroom closures with port-a-potties will not eliminate the risk of spreading COVID-19. By increasing opportunity for the rate of usage of porta potties in our parks we increase, the level of risk substantially. For this reason staff does not recommend adding port-a-potties to our parks.