



Enforcement of the Gorge Waterway – Next Steps

Date: Friday, October 21, 2016

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — On October 13, 2016, City Council directed staff to proceed with the removal of abandoned vessels from the Gorge Waterway and to seek injunctions as required to remove any vessels or wharves that remain in the area in contravention of City bylaws.

Based on community input, on May 26, 2016, City Council approved changes to improve the management of the Gorge Waterway, limiting long-term mooring to a maximum of 48 hours, and not more than 72 hours in a 30-day period. The changes enhance the use of the waterway for recreation, prohibit residential use and the storage of vessels, and address the negative impacts that unregulated marine activities are having on the marine environment and Victoria residents, without restricting navigation.

Currently, there are 24 vessels and four floating wharves illegally situated in the area. Yesterday, the City posted follow-up notices on vessels and wharves anchored in the Gorge Waterway, reminding owners that they are occupying this area contrary to the City's Zoning Regulation Bylaw. The notice asks that all vessels and wharves be removed by Friday, October 28, 2016. The previous notice, issued in mid-June, requested boats and vessels be removed from the waterway by July 18, 2016. Subsequently, three vessels voluntarily left the area.

Approximately seven of the 24 vessels are used as residences. The City is working in partnership with Pacifica Housing to offer outreach services to those living aboard these vessels to assist them in finding alternate housing. An open forum will be held on Tuesday, October 25, 2016 from noon – 2 p.m. at the Victoria West Community Centre at 521 Craigflower Road, to provide an opportunity for those living aboard vessels to connect with Pacifica Housing's outreach team.

The ultimate goal is for all owners to remove their vessels and wharves voluntarily. After Friday, October 28, 2016, the City will begin enforcement to remove the remaining vessels according to Transport Canada's requirements. If necessary, the City will seek an injunction, a court order from the BC Supreme Court, for the removal of any remaining vessels that have not complied with the City's Zoning Regulation Bylaw. City Council has approved up to \$120,000 for enforcement of the Gorge Waterway.

The City of Victoria is currently working with a local company to remove two sunken vessels from the area. Signs will soon be posted, informing the public of the limited mooring regulations. City Bylaw officers will continue to monitor the Gorge Waterway, and the public is asked to report any long-term mooring by calling 250.361.0215.

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY: City Clerk Chris Coates will be available for interviews today from 11 a.m. – noon at Victoria City Hall.

ATTACHMENT: Image of the Gorge Waterway Park District.

— 30 —

For More Information:

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