



STAFF REPORT

TO: CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
FROM: BRIGID REYNOLDS, CONSULTING TOWN PLANNER
SUBJECT: STORAGE CONTAINERS
MEETING DATE: JANUARY 13, 2026

PURPOSE

To present options to regulate and/or enforce the use of unapproved storage containers in the Town.

BACKGROUND

The Zoning Bylaw does not permit storage containers, unless permitted by a site-specific zoning amendment.

- Section 4.3.17 Restricted Uses – d) storage containers
- Section 4.3.6 e. - A storage container, where expressly permitted, shall be entirely enclosed, or wholly screened.

The only zone that permits a storage container is on a site-specific basis on a Public Use (P-1) zoned property - Lot B, Section 6, Renfrew District (situated in Cowichan Lake Land District), Plan VIP61171. This is the Palsson School located at 30 Grosskleg Way. The bylaw also states that it must be properly screened. Despite the Zoning Bylaw prohibiting containers, there are many located around Town on private and public property including the wastewater treatment plant and fire hall. Staff do not have an exact number of containers distributed around Town and collecting this information requires time and staff resources.

At its regular meeting on December 16, 2025, Council directed staff to provide Council with possible options on this matter. Council also directed staff to work with a property owner to remove a storage container on their property.

DISCUSSION

The Zoning Bylaw clearly does not permit the use of storage containers. Depending on Council's direction it may be helpful to identify goals to guide this project. Clear goals will assist the community to understand Council's rationale and will assist staff to prepare the appropriate policy, bylaw, and/or response. Some questions that may be helpful to identify these goals include:

- **What does Council want to achieve?**
- **Does Council simply want to enforce the Zoning Bylaw? Or is this about regulating community character?**
- **What are the community's preferences regarding containers?**
- **Where does this project fit within Council's strategic plan related to land use matters?**
- **What level of proactive enforcement, if any, does Council desire?**

Proactive enforcement of unpermitted use of storage containers would require amendments to the Municipal Ticketing Information Bylaw 1086, 2022 and financial investments for staffing and ancillary costs.

Consultation

There are several residents in Town with containers on their property, some have been there longer than others, some may not be able to move the container off the property, and some maybe inside a building, but the numbers are not known. While storage containers are not permitted, the Town has not enforced this regulation, so their use continues. Additionally, the Town is using them for storage on two Town properties for mission critical, operationally sensitive matters, i.e. life safety and operations. As a result, community members likely have opinions about their use and asking the community their preferences about the use of storage containers may be insightful.

Considerations Permit the use of storage containers

Should Council consider permitting storage containers there may be additional considerations to be addressed. Some possible considerations include:

- Permit their use in all zone district or only in specific zone districts.
- Limit the number, size and location of storage containers on a property
- Allow storage containers on certain sized lots only.
- Permit the use of storage containers by way of temporary use permits (TUP). This would require an amendment to the Zoning Bylaw as TUPs aren't permitted in residential zone areas
- Permit the use of storage containers for dwelling units.
- Permit the use while a dwelling or subdivision is being built
- Safety related to the storage of hazardous materials.
- Building permit implications.

Possible Path

The following is a possible path for Council's consideration to develop regulation on the use of storage containers:

- Gather an inventory of storage container use around Town to understand the extent.
- Review how other local governments are regulating storage containers.
- Ask the community their preferences on the use of storage containers.
- Report back to Council on community preferences.
- Council provides direction to prepare a draft bylaw or maintain the status quo.
- Staff prepares a draft bylaw for Council's consideration or enforces the existing bylaw.

IMPLICATIONS

a. Financial:

The financial implications have to do with the amount of staff resources to undertake this project.

b. Policy/Legislation:

The Zoning Bylaw does not permit the use of storage containers in any zone district. However, there are numerous containers scattered around Town including two Town owned sites. Enforcement is complaint driven. The Municipal Ticketing Information Bylaw 1086, 2022 must be amended to establish the correct regulatory

c. Strategic Priority:

This is not a strategic priority for the Planning Department. The Department's priorities are to complete CMHC HAF deliverables and Bill 44 Provincially mandated amendments.

d. Sustainability:

Reusing storage containers minimizes waste and can be a cost effective alternative for storage and/or dwellings.

e. Communication:

Given the number of unpermitted storage containers distributed around Town, it's important to hear community members preferences on this matter.

f. Staffing Implication:

To undertake a review of this matter requires staff resources to inventory the extent of the use, consult with the community, research the subject, prepare detailed options for Council and possible bylaw drafting.

Recommendation

The contract planner does not have a recommendation for Council on this matter.

Signed:

Brigid Reynolds

Brigid Reynolds RPP MCIP
Contract Planner

Concurrence:

John T

John Thomas
Chief Administrative Officer