

NEWS RELEASE

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Changes to Council meeting processes due to COVID-19

Summary

On March 26, 2020, a Ministry Order was announced allowing for changes to Council meeting processes during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Order (Ministerial Order No. M083) outlines that local governments can hold their meetings electronically; that they can have open meetings and not invite the public in to the council or boardroom chambers; and, that they can pass three readings and the adoption of necessary bylaws in one meeting if the need arises due to emergent and time sensitive financial matters.

Guidelines with respect to this order came out on Tuesday, March 31, 2020, and the order, accompanied by the guidelines, has allowed for the City of Nanaimo to make the following modifications to meeting processes that will carry on throughout the duration of the order:

Regularly Scheduled Council Meetings

- Regular meetings of Council will go ahead as scheduled; however, members of the public are asked to observe meetings virtually and not attend in person.
- The City will not limit meetings as prescribed in this order by passing bylaws in a single meeting; rather, we will only use this option for matters that are emergent in nature.
- The regularly scheduled Council meetings will remain at the Shaw Auditorium. This will allow for the continuation of regular scheduled Shaw cable programming which airs on Mondays at 7:00 p.m.
- Regular business of Council will continue at these meetings.
- Delegation requests for unrelated Council matters will not be permitted under this order and throughout the duration of the pandemic.
- Requests to Council from members of organizations or the public will be put under correspondence on the agenda in lieu of the group or individual attending in person.
- Delegation requests related to agenda matters, such as a developer that would like to come speak to their development permit application or a member of the public to speak to an item on the agenda at the Shaw Auditorium, would be allowable as physical distancing requirements could be maintained.
- Question period will be suspended throughout the duration of this order being in effect.
- Council will attend via Zoom, or another electronic format, or in person at these regular meetings - maintaining physical distancing at all times.
- Members of staff that are partaking in the meeting will be spread out in the auditorium in the marked seating or outside in the lobby area.

Special Council Meetings

Criteria noted for Special meetings is in line with the Ministerial Order No. M083 and the accompanying guidelines. Special meetings may be called to deal with emergent matters due to COVID-19, and the order would be in effect.

- Special Council meetings will be held at the Service and Resource Centre at 411 Dunsmuir Street.
- Special meetings will be conducted electronically only, by Zoom or another electronic format, as attending virtually allows Council to comply with physical distancing.
- The public will not be permitted to attend because of physical distancing requirements.
- Meetings will be recorded and live-streamed.
- Question period will be omitted throughout the duration of this pandemic and while the order is in effect.

Key Points

- Ministerial Order No. M083 allows for modifications to meeting processes, enabling physical distancing measures in respect to Council meetings
- Members of the public are asked to observe meetings virtually and not attend in person

- Electronic conferencing software, such as Zoom, will be utilized by members of Council to allow for participation without attending in person
- Question period and delegation requests unrelated to Council matters will be suspended during the duration of this order being in effect

Quotes

"The guidelines laid out in this Ministerial Order will enable Council meetings to continue while ensuring the safety of Council members, staff and the public. These temporary measures that the Province has enacted allow for physical distancing to take place without limiting the work of Council during this pandemic."

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