

NEWS RELEASE

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Council approves COVID-19 Financial Response, Relief and Recovery Work Plan

A Special Council Meeting was held today to address the City's immediate financial relief program for homeowners, businesses and community organizations.

The City is taking a measured financial approach to ensure business continuity and help residents during these challenging times. This involves focusing on core essential staffing and redeployment planning, moving planned capital projects forward, and discussing financial relief.

The City's Park Ambassador Pilot Program, [launched today](#), is an important example of a redeployment option intended to assist the public to adhere to physical distancing while enjoying the City's public parks and trails. The presence of Park Ambassadors at two of Nanaimo's busiest parks – Westwood Lake Park and along the waterfront at Maffeo Sutton Park – will contribute to public safety, livability, and the aesthetic preservation of our public spaces. This pilot program, if successful, will roll out to other popular parks and trails in the near future.

The first measure approved by Council today is the Utility Bill Due Date Deferral which extends the due date for bills issued after March 17 from 30 days to 90 days. As well, Council approved the continued application of the 5% discount if paid within the 90 days, previously the discount applied to payment within 30 days. If every eligible property received the discount, City expenses would increase by \$337,143 based on budgeted revenues for 2020.

City administration also provided projected 2020 financial impacts with three different scenarios based on City facilities substantially reopening on July 1, 2020, September 1, 2020 or January 1, 2021. Within a framework of taking a measured response, and positioning the City for rapid economic recovery, parking fee relief, City facility rent relief and maximization of grant distributions will be finalized by Council in upcoming meetings.

In early May, Council will be determining the property tax rate for 2020. Currently, the City is anticipating Provincial direction regarding property tax deferral but has no further information. If direction is not received, Council will consider relief measures including reducing the July 3rd penalty of 5% to near zero, and, additionally, reducing the August 14th penalty, pushing the legislated late payment penalties later in the year.

City staff and Council continue to adhere to recommendations of Health officials and monitor all levels of government relief to determine impacts to the City and for opportunities to leverage all programs.

Key Points:

- As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City anticipates revenue losses from recreation, aquatics, and arenas; casino and investment income; Vancouver Island Conference Centre, and; building permits and user fees.
- Mayor and Council are working with staff on the prudent fiscal framework to position the City for rapid economic recovery, parking fee relief, City facility rent relief, and maximization of grant distributions.

Quick Facts:

- In excess of 200 individuals have been impacted through facility closures and program cancellations. These include full-time, part-time, and casual employees as well as contract instructors.
- In an effort to provide some immediate financial relief to Nanaimo residential and commercial property owners who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Council approved the extension the payment due dates for water, sewer and garbage services from 30 days to 90 days.
- Council also approved the Revenue Anticipation Borrowing Bylaw 2020 No. 7308, which ensures that the City could access funds for cash flow purposes in the event the collection of taxes becomes problematic due to the

COVID-19 pandemic or if cash flows are adversely impacted due to the Province making changes to tax payment deadlines.

- Council approved City staff to continue with critical and important capital infrastructure projects, which in turn will help with local economic stimulation. Focusing on asset stewardship and maintenance is vital for the sustainability for City infrastructure, parks, buildings and roads as well.

Quotes:

“The city continues to be open for business, even though our civic building are closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the next few Council meetings we will be making decisions to provide relief to our residents, businesses, and community partners. And, I hope that by following the governments’ health orders we will start seeing positive shifts in our economic situation so that we can achieve a rapid economic recovery.”

Leonard Krog, Mayor, City of Nanaimo

“Like all municipalities, the City’s operations, services, and revenues have been impacted by the unprecedented economic situation created by COVID-19. Unfortunately, this has resulted in having to make difficult decisions concerning facilities, operations, and sadly staffing. I look forward to the day when we can reopen and be back at full capacity.”

Jake Rudolph, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Nanaimo

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