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Newmarket's Response to COVID-19 Staff Report to Council

Report Number: 2020-27

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Recommendations

1. That the report entitled Newmarket's Response to COVID-19 dated April 27, 2020 be received for information.

Executive Summary

Staff have been extremely responsive to change and to assist during COVID-19. The following is an Executive Summary of Newmarket's response, including key highlights and business operations on hold during COVID-19 adapted operations. Administration's COVID-19 Specific Response Plan and details of each department's activities and operational responses to essential and non-essential service delivery are provided under the Discussion section of this Report.

COVID-19 Response Highlights

- The Town's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) has been activated and running continuously since the provincial and local declarations of emergency to ensure that essential services are being maintained for the safety of the community and adjusted to accommodate the health and safety of staff.
- [COVID-19 branded website portal](#) was established to keep all related messaging together including news, updates, frequently asked questions and links to York Region's Public Health's webpage as well as information about affected services and Frequently Asked Questions about Town services.
- Constant monitoring of Provincial and Federal updates and developing programs and community actions for municipal impact.
- Appointing a Chief Positivity Officer and 10 Community Positivity Ambassadors, to raise community spirit and to ensure Town staff providing essential services

continue to see the light too. These ambassador's embody positivity and perseverance and act as a local beacon of hope during difficult times, and supporting the Positivity Campaign - [#StandApartTogether](#) and to quell staff and resident concerns.

- Success is being observed by the unexpected staff and community actions, support and the building of new relationships.
- Utilizing the Town's website to establish "[Home Sweet Home](#)", an educational resource linking recreation and culture activities of interest to all ages.
- Senior Administration has taken a leading role in staff engagement through frequent Commission and department meetings, CAO Updates and virtual Town Hall.

Purpose

This Report provides Council with a brief summary of Administration's response to the Province of Ontario's declaration of a State of Emergency on March 15, 2020 due to COVID-19 and effects on municipal operations, activities and initiatives to date.

Background

In early March, Corporate Communications created a COVID-19 working group that included staff members from Human Resources, Legislative Services, Central York Fire Services, Public Works Services, Recreation and Culture and Corporate Customer Services. This working group met weekly to discuss all immediate needs related to COVID-19. This included internal and external communications messaging to staff and residents on COVID-19, supplies, services offered by the Town, business continuity, emergency planning and more. On March 13, 2020 in anticipation of the COVID-19 implications to staff and the community, Newmarket facilities were closed and programs cancelled. Following the Province's declaration and COVID-19 related Emergency Council Meeting on March 17, 2020, Mayor John Taylor (Newmarket Council) declared a State of Emergency on March 18, 2020 during an Emergency Council Meeting. An Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) was activated March 19, 2020 in response to COVID-19.

Discussion

The following information is to provide Council with an update on Administration's COVID-19 Specific Response Plan and Department adaptations to operations organized by Commission under the headings of Key Areas of Focus, Projects/Programs on Hold and Workplace Adjustments resulting from Newmarket's response to COVID-19.

COVID-19 Specific Response Plan

Focus on Essential Services

Municipal services deemed essential during the COVID-19 State of Emergency were to ensure critical services are accessible and infrastructure maintained to preserve the

health and safety of the residential and business communities while adhering to social distancing requirements and other Provincial and Federal regulations. These include: access to information through Corporate Customer Services and Corporate Communications website updates, Central York Fire Services, Utility Services (water and hydro), on-line Library Services, Economic Development local business support, Parking, Bylaw and Emergency Property Standards Enforcement for health and safety reasons and education on social distancing in public areas, on-line Planning application processing and Building permitting, and Public Works Services (critical infrastructure maintenance, waste and recycling pick-up, and critical water and wastewater services).

Business Continuity

Following the focus on the provision of Essential Services, departments prepared Business Continuity Plans to achieve the “new” normal operational requirements and changes due to COVID-19 including staffing for assisting with higher than normal demands on essential services and “new” operational expectations. Staff related requirements are reported below under the section Human Resources.

Technology, Processes and Procedures Adjustments: Numerous processes and procedures have been adapted to accommodate Provincial and Federal regulations and to keep staff safe (working from home and workplace social distancing). Implementing and utilizing technology to conduct virtual meetings, obtain digital approvals and processing financial transactions, etc. has been paramount to our success during Newmarket’s COVID-19 response. Staff are innovating to make technical adjustments requiring process and workflow workarounds to get work done. To this end, Information Technology staff have been working diligently to assist staff remote working to ensure they have access to technology, systems and programs to perform their duties. Information Technology also played a vital role in ensuring continuity of the EOC. The Clerk’s Division have been a key user of remote meeting technology in their support of Council and staff decision making and communications.

Communications: Since the declaration at the Emergency Council Meeting on March 17, 2020, staff supporting the EOC conduct regular meetings. The Strategic Leadership Team is conducting virtual meetings frequently to analyze and assess the current state of affairs. Departments continue to report up through their Commissioners on essential service provision and needs to maintain necessary municipal operations. Human Resources continues to communicate essential information for staff concerning COVID-19 social distancing requirements, redeployment needs, benefits, remote working ergonomics and health and safety.

Corporate Communications and Corporate Customer Services have been playing a critical role in keeping the community and staff informed through increased digital communications, responding to media inquiries and public inquiries and complaints, monitoring social media, and COVID-19 website updates.

Workplace Adjustments

The following workplace adjustments noted below are common to all departments. Unique workplace adjustments are noted further below within specific department reports.

- Staff working remotely have transitioned to using virtual meeting tools to perform in-person meetings for essential, non-essential, employee engagement, and committee work.
- Staff are working strategically to find efficiencies to manage extra workloads imposed by COVID-19 and planning for next steps of recovery and returning to “business normal” operations.
- Continually adjusting business operations to provide the residential and business communities with assistance in meeting social, physical, wellness and business needs.
- Continuing normal administrative functions adjusted to meet business continuity needs.
- All Requests for Proposals relative to non-essential operations are being postponed.
- Staff are working on Policy reviews and development in the background to be future ready and to support operational changes as needed.
- Due to building closures and staff working remotely, Building Maintenance staff have closed access to specific washrooms at the Municipal Offices temporarily to minimize excessive cleaning maintenance requirements.
- Any organizational realignment and associated recruitments are being deferred.
- All discretionary spending, minor building renovations and professional development expenses have been temporarily suspended.

Positivity Ambassadors

Concerned for and understanding of the mental health implications resulting from COVID-19 impacts on residents and employees, the Strategic Leadership Team and Council appointed a Chief Positivity Officer and 10 Community Positivity Ambassadors to uplift community and staff spirit and keep people motivated, informed and positive during the extremely disruptive and challenging times to usual work and life routines. The ambassadors selected embody positivity and perseverance and act as a local beacon of hope during difficult times, and to support the Town’s Positivity Campaign - [#StandApartTogether](#) and to quell staff and resident concerns. These efforts will also ensure Town staff providing essential services continue to see the light too.

Business Operations on Hold

- All facilities were closed to the public and programs cancelled (March 13, 2020) with the exception of the Municipal Offices and the Operations Centre. Energy conservation and cost containment have been the prime rationale for putting all buildings in dormant mode.
- Municipal Offices and the Operations Centre closed to public (March 16, 2020)
- Committee of the Whole and Council meetings were cancelled until further notice (March 19, 2020).

- All recreation and culture programs, rentals and events were cancelled (March 20, 2020).
- All playgrounds and the dog park were closed (March 26, 2020).
- Non-critical projects and programs have been suspended.

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Central York Fire Services

Key Areas of Focus:

- Running the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) (opened on March 24th) which is currently meeting virtually 3 times per week, and expanding the Planning and Logistics sections to plan for the recovery phase of COVID-19.
- Maintaining communication with the Regional EOC.
- Sourcing PPE from different vendors.
- Working with the Fire Services Association on many Labour Relations issues and the Joint Health and Safety Committee.
- Providing assistance to Southlake Hospital, Southlake Residence Care, The Food Pantry, Inn for the Cold and other partners and organizations in Newmarket.
- Class of 12 recruits started a condensed training program April 14th.

Projects/Programs on Hold:

- Graduation ceremony of the 12 new recruits will be on hold until November.

Workplace Adjustments:

- Fire Chief has been redeployed to serve at the Region in their virtual Regional Emergency Operations Centre (REOC) in the role of Regional Fire Coordinator.
- Assistant Deputy, Training & Emergency Management has been redeployed to the Newmarket EOC.
- As Aurora has declared a State of Emergency, the Deputy Fire Chief has been assigned to the Aurora EOC in addition to maintaining regular duties and coordinating fleet regular maintenance services and emergency servicing for the fire trucks and maintaining equipment inventories to all six front line apparatus.
- A 3 month extension to the retiring Deputy Fire Chief to oversee daily operational requirements for staff and to provide back-up to Newmarket and Aurora's EOC's has been activated.

Corporate Communications

Key Areas of Focus:

- Branding COVID-19 for consistency in all messaging from the Town.
- Keeping informed through participation in various provincial, regional, municipal and association virtual meetings and media releases.

- Issuing timely information and messaging via all communication channels on Essential Services; Property Tax Relief Initiative; Waste and Recycling; Closures and Cancellations; Bylaw Enforcement and Fines; Council Meetings; and re-sharing information from the Province, Federal Government and York Region Public Health, etc.
- Responding and reporting to a higher than normal volume of media, social media and website inquiries to the public.
- Assisting the CAO, Mayor's Office, Human Resources, and essential service departments with various COVID-19 communications.

Projects/Programs on Hold:

- All projects not related to COVID-19 have been delayed or suspended.

Workplace Adjustments:

- Collaborating and back filling/supporting arrangements with many departments in response to their COVID-19 related operational adjustments.
- Adjusted the social media calendar to include important information to residents during COVID-19.

Human Resources

Key Areas of Focus:

- All aspects of COVID-19 related to employees and Health & Safety concerns.

Projects/Programs on Hold:

- Recruitment with the exception of a select few, such as the Deputy Fire Chief.
- Learning & Development program (partially).
- Negotiations with SEIU for a renewal agreement.
- Employee Services Project (partially), Employee Engagement Survey actions, Managers Toolkit and non-legislated Policy reviews.

Workplace Adjustments:

- Producing new materials to support staff working from home such as the HR Newsletter.
- Updating COVID19 FAQs.
- Developing processes to support employees to work from home, etc.
- Monitoring new and changing Provincial and Federal government programs for eligibility under COVID-19 such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and Canada Summer Grants Program.
- Listening and responding to staff respecting workplace adjustments and public actions resulting in safety concerns.

Innovation and Strategic Initiatives

Key Areas of Focus:

- Working on the implementation of the Water Meter Project, including billing irregularities, data quality control measures, third party vendor contract reviews and updates.
- Continuing to monitor and analyze federal and provincial funding announcements and preparing briefing notes on grant and funding opportunities, monitoring grant deadlines for ongoing projects, completing requirements of existing agreements, researching and reviewing 2020 funding opportunities, including the FCM grant to implement the NEER program.
- Collaborating and providing support to other departments on a variety of projects, including the Business Retention Information Center, the Community Benefits Charge/Development Charge program and Policy development and previously prioritized updates.

Projects/Programs on Hold:

- Water Meter Project installations.
- Downtown parking report research and development.
- Electric Vehicle charging station research and implementation.

Workplace Adjustments:

- Refer to Business Continuity section above for common workplace adjustments reported.

Development and Infrastructure Services Commission

Engineering Services

Key Areas of Focus:

- Continuing work on studies, designs, drawings, applications, projects and field work to be future and tender ready in the Capital Projects, Development Engineering, and Transportation Services business units.
- Capital Projects is improving accuracy for “multi-year budgeting” for capital projects, continuing to collaborate with the Asset Management and Financial Services to project the long-term financial needs to maintain and extend the life-cycle of our linear, SWM Pond and LID assets, reviewing results of legislated bi-annual bridge inspections, reviewing itemized payment certificates for Town construction projects, issuing payments and responding to ongoing litigation matters for construction contracts, responding to new heat tickets and testing a new format for remote delivery.
- Development Engineering is reviewing applications for future developments as developers are only permitted to complete housing projects in progress by the Provincial Order. New Housing projects are currently not permitted.
- Two Inflow and Infiltration projects are continuing.
- Transportation Services is working with York Regional Police (YRP) to obtain collision and traffic data, reviewing future cycling facilities and bike lanes, traffic

calming bollard needs and wayfinding signage, researching new technology and automated vehicles, reviewing speed limits, and monitoring solar-powered speed boards.

- Monitoring two stormwater management ponds for “critical” work due to sedimentation and possibility of damage to private property, working on the Climate Change Risk Analysis, Macro-Economic analysis of watershed-wide stormwater works.

Projects/Programs on Hold:

- Traffic pattern studies as patterns have changed dramatically with school, mall and non-essential store closures, and most of the residents working from home.
- Traffic Calming Bollard installations.
- Construction work for the repair and maintenance of stormwater management (SWM) ponds.
- All non-critical large linear capital construction works (road reconstruction, new watermains, sewers, trails and parks construction).

Workplace Adjustments:

- All site visits are conducted individually using staff member’s personal vehicles to mitigate social contact.

Planning and Building Services

Key Areas of Focus:

- Continuing to hold pre-consultation meetings for new Planning applications via videoconference.
- Accepting electronic submissions of applications for Zoning By-law Amendment, Official Plan Amendment, Draft Plan of Subdivision, and Draft Plan of Condominium.
- Advancing site plan applications not required to be presented to Site Plan Review Committee through the standard process.
- Continuing to review and process existing applications. Depending on the type of application and whether public notice and meetings are required, applications may advance or be paused until the State of Emergency is lifted.
- Accepting new building applications and processing and issuing Building Permits.
- Continuing building inspections for unoccupied homes under construction and for construction projects deemed essential by the Province.
- Continuing building maintenance operations at 395 Mulock and augmented as needed with the assistance of other Town Facilities’ staff.

Projects/Programs on Hold:

- Statutory Public Meetings for Planning applications until scheduled and regular business items move forward to Council.
- Issuance of Building Permits subject to all restrictions and prohibitions under the Provincial orders as of April 4, 2020.

Workplace Adjustments:

- Pre-consultation meetings for new Planning applications via video conference.
- New applications for Site Plan Approval are being accepted electronically.

Public Works Services

Key Areas of Focus:

- Delivering critical services while maximizing the safety of essential workers.
- Continuing key service deliveries for Water, Roads, Parks and managing key facilities during COVID-19.
- Working to implement cost containment strategies where possible and maintaining a balance between core service delivery and cost containment maximization.
- Preserving and maintaining assets for determining program and project delivery to minimize the degradation of the Town's high value assets.
- Ongoing strategic management and calculated redeployment of staff and resources to ensure strong fiscal discipline while completing meaningful and critical work.

Projects/Programs on Hold:

- All non-critical capital maintenance projects.
- Annual operating programs that are not considered critical and essential have been suspended. There has been a continuation of some contracted work within COVID-19 guidelines.

Workplace Adjustments:

- Significant modifications have been made to the Operations Centre, including two distinct, physically separated and independent working areas to follow COVID-19 guidelines.

Community Services Commission

Customer Services

Key Areas of Focus:

- Delivering frontline customer services, handling of inquiries and complaints from residents, local businesses and Members of Council related to all matters including those for COVID-19 through email, telephone and social media.
- Continuing the After Hours Emergency services call centre and receiving daily reports for staff in the Customer Service Centre to follow up as necessary.
- Tracking all inquiries and issues through the CRM system and providing daily reports related to COVID-19 for the Strategic Leadership Team.
- Continuing to process all payments, process refunds (largely for Recreation programs) and register burial permits.

Projects/Programs on Hold:

- None reported.

Workplace Adjustments:

- Rotating shifts have been implemented to have two Customer Service Associates on site at the Municipal Office's Customer Service Centre to process payments for deposit and to issue burial permits to local funeral homes.
- Modifying the Enhanced Customer Service training launched last year for availability to all staff from their home locations. The two day program is being modified to consist of eight separate modules, delivered by the same two Customer Service Associates through video conferencing tools.
- Working closely with Financial Services to accommodate customers requiring property tax information for the completion of their personal income taxes.
- Altering processes to meet customer needs while respecting privacy laws and compliance requirements, including accommodating residents wishing to obtain building permits unable to access the Town offices due to the closures.

Economic Development

Key Areas of Focus:

- Launching the Newmarket Economic Resiliency Action Plan to include Business Assistance Concierge (BAC) and Shop Local gift card programs, and including Webinars and virtual meetings, Weekly COVID-19 business e-newsletter.
- Collaborating with our neighbours, a recovery plan and strategy, working with York Region and its neighbours in northern York Region to support all local businesses across each community and ensure access to appropriate resources at all levels of government.
- Establishing a Tax relief program, a more detailed tax relief program is currently being finalized following Council's approval to waive all penalties and interest related to late payment of property taxes for the March and April instalments for all businesses.
- Other Emerging Opportunities in the concept stage to support local businesses include: how to best support the rebuilding of the supply chain and finding employees, helping local businesses identify potential gaps locally; consider financial investments beyond the traditional Financial Incentive Program (FIP); continuing to invest FIP dollars into advancing projects that meet specific criteria; furthering grant connections, supporting continued development of a digital Main Street where Business Improvement Area (BIA) businesses strive to shift more to online platforms; etc.

Projects/Programs on Hold:

- None reported.

Workplace Adjustments:

- Refer to Business Continuity section above for common workplace adjustments reported.

Newmarket Public Library

Key Areas of Focus:

- Providing services online, including digital downloads of eBooks, video, music, audiobooks, learning courses, magazines, and research. Renewing library cards as needed and providing temporary online registrations for those without cards.
- Providing programs online, including storytime, reading clubs, etc.
- Launching a check-in service for people to request a phone call from staff to talk about books, check in on their well-being, and help them connect to online services if needed.
- Working with NewMarket on the production of face shields for staff of local health facilities.

Projects/Programs on Hold:

- All in-person programs and services.

Workplace Adjustments:

- The Library Board has held two online meetings.

Recreation and Culture Services

Key Areas of Focus:

- Remaining connected with residents through regular phone calls and virtual group chats (including weekly calls to members of Newmarket Seniors Meeting Place), virtual trivia days, weekly virtual programs with BASE program participants.
- Launching and updating content of [Home Sweet Home](#), an online portal providing recreation and culture opportunities for residents at home.
- Addressing customer issues, including refunds, cancellations, rescheduling of programs, performers, third party events.
- Working closely with major event providers to explore alternative services, such as Newmarket 10 Minute Play Festival and York Region Pride events.
- Serving daily lunches for vulnerable members of the community.
- Providing hamper deliveries daily on behalf of The Food Pantry.

Projects/Programs on Hold:

- All spring programs have been cancelled.
- All rentals and permits from March 13th through May 31st have been cancelled.
- All special events from March 13th through August 1st have been cancelled.
- Theatre grand reopening has been postponed until Fall.

Workplace Adjustments:

- Three staff are working out of the Municipal Offices involved in the daily lunch program and food pantry delivery.

Corporate Services Commission

Financial Services

Key Areas of Focus:

- Developing programs and procedures regarding financial relief related to the financial impacts of COVID-19 with further details to be reported in the Financial Relief Program report to Council.
- Working on Year-End requirements including the audit, financial statements and statutory reports.
- Implementing JDE software upgrade and acclimatizing to new tax software (TXM).
- Continuing to manage normal business operations, including Payroll, Accounts Payable/Receivable, etc..

Projects/Programs on Hold:

- Cash receipts are not being processed.
- Tax sales.

Workplace Adjustments:

- Modification of paper based procedures to allow for remote work and workplace social distancing has proven to be challenging.
- Year-End audit is being conducted virtually.

Information Technology (IT)

Key Areas of Focus:

- Providing additional support and assistance (appropriate remote access, and queuing systems for Customer Services, and connectivity, training and troubleshooting) to all staff working remotely to suit individual requirements, including the provision of laptops to be connected and supporting them through any technical issues.
- , Providing assistance with phone and video conferencing identifications (ID's), and peripheral equipment to ensure staff can fully work from home, resulting in additional requirements for added support, training and troubleshooting.
- Continuing project work, including eWaste provider, Digital Display Replacements, JDE Upgrade, Land Use and Permit Tracking, Recreation software replacement, GIS Dashboards, Crowdsourcing App, Employee Services.
- Continuing back-end maintenance activities, such as performing upgrades, patching servers, monitoring infrastructure, and maintaining required bandwidth.

Projects/Programs on Hold:

- Upgrade to tax billing software.
- IT/Library integration.
- Project Management Tool.
- IT Strategies, Data Strategy.

- Website Replacement.

Workplace Adjustments:

- Established 2 onsite teams of 3 staff each on rotating shifts to continue the required hands on support.

Legal and Procurement Services

Key Areas of Focus:

- Maintaining business continuity with land development, real estate and leasing matters being advanced as business as usual.
- Supporting other departments with legal reviews and providing advice regarding impacts of government emergency measures and legislation on procurements, contracts and planning matters.
- Overseeing 30 active procurement processes in various stages.

Projects/Programs on Hold:

- None reported.

Workplace Adjustments:

- Refer to Business Continuity section above for common workplace adjustments reported.

Legislative Services

Key Areas of Focus:

- Supporting Council through recent legislative changes to allow electronic participation in Council meetings by the Clerk's Division.
- Providing claims and risk advice to inform decisions regarding park and facility closures and Procurement Services.
- Redeploying Regulatory Services' municipal enforcement officers to respond to COVID-related calls, while maintaining usual formal complaint calls received for Parking (health and safety), Property Standards, and Licensing concerns including:
 - Proactive Park Patrols – educating and enforcing park closures, group gatherings, and social distancing measures.
 - Formal Complaint Response – educating and enforcing typical by-law related complaints (with a stronger focus on education at this time), responding to formal complaints for non-essential businesses remaining open or businesses operating contrary to the Provincial Emergency Order, or responding to formal complaints to private residences for group gatherings.
 - Mobile Business Licensing – The application process for Mobile Businesses began on April 1st. All classifications of mobile businesses have been deemed “essential services” pursuant to the Emergency Order and all York Regional Municipalities have reported continuing with

applications and business licence renewals. Continuing to accept process, and issue mobile business licence applications.

- Permits – Sign and Pool Permits are still being applied for and issued.
- Participating on a regional working group in relation to the interpretation and enforcement of the Provincial Emergency Order and other by-law related offences in an effort to remain consistent in approach.

Projects/Programs on Hold:

- Records Management project, including the Consultant's Information and Privacy Strategy, in-person records and information clean up, and the Enterprise Information Management system.
- Reports to Council, such as a quarterly Outstanding Matters List and the Advisory Committees' annual report to Council.
- Issuing parking tickets unrelated to health and safety, Parking Exemption Permit fees are not being charged, Lottery Licences, Accessory Dwelling Unit permits and inspections, Filming Permits, and Property Standards interior inspections (unless emergency-related).
- Preliminary planning for the 2022 Municipal Election that was underway in collaboration with other Greater Toronto Hamilton Area municipalities.

Workplace Adjustments:

- Developing a new process for issuing burial permits following authorization of the Ontario Registrar General.
- All business licence applications and renewals are now processed electronically.
- Exploring virtual Hearing Review processes for ticket disputes under Administrative Monetary Penalty System (AMPS).

Conclusion

During the declared State of Emergency for COVID-19, Administration's response has been to focus on ensuring that the health and safety of the community and employees remains of utmost importance while providing Essential Services under the direction of the Mayor and Council and the Province of Ontario. Staff have been key to maintaining essential and critical services, and respecting and adhering to social distancing orders. Staff continue to maintain a positive attitude while managing community concerns and complaints with the rapid changes in levels of service.

A few key outcomes observed to date include: improved communications; staff reliance on colleagues for work support; positive staff response to the call to action when non-essential services and business operations have been placed on hold; innovative workplace adjustments; implementing technology and improving processes and procedures to best transition into new workplace norms; and staff flexibility in response to emergency operations and course-corrections as circumstances have been changing on a daily basis.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

Business Continuity Plans have been prepared to manage essential and non-essential municipal operations in the current state of uncertainty.

Achieving the Town's vision of a community Well Beyond the Ordinary during the declared State of Emergency for COVID-19 has proven to be challenging. However, staff continue to serve the community to the best of their abilities, standing by their mission to make Newmarket Even Better, even under COVID-19 imposed restrictions and limitations. Staff core values are the foundation of their mission, demonstrated through their courage and creativity, accessibility and accountability, respect and integrity and above all, excellence for their commitment to going above and beyond in keeping the community safe and well informed.

Consultation

All Departments were consulted to provide content for the preparation of this Report.

Human Resource Considerations

A summary of the impact on human resources in response to COVID-19 is provided below.

Alternative Work Arrangements: Following the order imposed by the CAO, all staff able to work from home were asked to work remotely. Other work arrangements have been implemented, such as flexible shift work schedules, smaller team sizes and rotating shifts (Public Works Services, Information Technology, Newmarket Public Library and Regulatory Services). Only staff required to work directly from their respective workplace (Municipal Offices and Operations Centre) are permitted on-site and are evaluated on a case by case basis to ensure physical distancing practices are maintained. This included staff needing to respond to urgent requests or requiring access to physical records, or equipment to meet job requirements.

Redeployment: Some staff have been redeployed to different duties as they are unable to perform regular duties or if additional resources are required. Examples include: Newmarket Seniors' Meeting Place staff, supported by Customer Services, are connecting with members to check in on their needs, provide information and someone to chat with during times of loneliness and isolation. Parks staff have been redeployed to work with By-laws to assist with educating and enforcing the closures of parks and playgrounds. Legislative Services staff have been redeployed to assist Corporate Communications with the daily federal and provincial updates as well as the Finance department during the annual audit. The Claims and Risk Analyst has been redeployed to assist the Parks department with the development and installation of closure signs for Town buildings, facilities, parks and playgrounds. CYFS has redeployed Senior staff to manage the regional and two municipal EOC's.

New Hires: While most new hires are delayed, CYFS continue with the recruitment of 12 Firefighters to replace retirements.

Declared Emergency Leaves: Employees laid off due to facility closures and program cancellations including Town Casual, Seasonal and Sessional staff and Part-Time Library staff have been granted Emergency Leaves.

Overtime/Increased Workloads: In some areas, working overtime is necessary to ensure timely processes and to accommodate changing and/or new processes being put into place. However, this has resulted in some operating disruptions and requirement for patience and tolerance in service delays.

Mental Health and Staff Morale: Departments continue to monitor staff mental health and morale while providing a supportive and positive environment. Overall, staff continue to respond positively and maintain positive attitudes with an understanding mindset to workplace adjustments and modifications. Heightened collaboration amongst departments is occurring. An example of this is Corporate Communications support to Public Works Services with their internal campaign #WetheNorth/#WeDaSouth for boosting morale for staff and encouraging them to embrace their roles as essential workers supporting residents and the community at large.

Human Resources and ERIC are providing ongoing support to ensure staff are aware of the support and resources that are available, if needed, and to address any concerns.

Some staff members required to physically attend their workplace are nervous, while others working from home are finding it difficult to adjust and is a cause of stress for some staff.

Overall, staff, department, cross-department and project team interactions are occurring frequently through virtual meetings and phone calls, providing not only workplace updates but support for one another.

Training: Staff are taking advantage of on-line training opportunities to stay informed of innovative solutions to municipal operations, legislative compliance requirements, and skills development.

Budget Impact

Financial Services staff are monitoring and tracking all COVID-19 related expenses. All discretionary spending has been suspended to offset the potential financial impact from property tax deferrals and lost revenue from program cancellations. Reports to Council on the financial impacts will be forthcoming.

Attachments

None.

Approval

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Jag Sharma, Chief Administrative Officer

Contact

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