



April 22, 2020

Council confirms initial community relief measures, looking for more in light of COVID-19

As initial community relief measures related to City fees and property taxes, Campbell River property owners will see water and sewer fees rolled back to 2019 rates and late penalties for property tax payments won't be charged until Oct. 1.

The changes were confirmed during a special meeting on April 20, where Council reviewed a range of information about City finances, including anticipated cash flow delays and revenue shortages, and how to ease financial hardships resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Council will consider more information and potential options at the April 27 and May 11 meetings.

"In this is a difficult time, we are taking a very close look at what can be done at a municipal level to assist residents, non-profits and businesses, while focusing on continuing core service delivery and the health and safety of our community," says Mayor Andy Adams. "The rollback in user fees that we've now confirmed will save each household approximately \$24. Metered customers, including businesses and non-profits will also see cost savings based on consumption levels. The property tax increase that was planned for 2020 would amount to \$79 for the average home in Campbell River, and that will be re-considered at a future meeting."

Council also supported:

- No returned payment (for insufficient funds) penalty until the end of 2020
- No late-payment penalty for metered water and sewer billings until the end of 2020 (does not apply to bulk water supply)

To complement a range of provincial resources available to businesses, Council approved offering the City's commercial tenants, primarily aviation businesses, the option to delay lease payments without penalty until the end of the year.

"We're also looking for every opportunity to support local businesses who can provide services or supplies for City projects," adds city manager Deborah Sargent.

To ensure local government services continue to be provided to the community, Council endorsed using funding from the financial stabilization reserve to offset revenue losses. This fund was established as part of the City's 10-Year Financial Stability and Resiliency Plan.

"The Province has emphasized that local government services are essential for community wellbeing, and we're carefully examining the long-term impact of pulling funding from other reserve funds, as well as options for cost savings through reduced training, and, potentially, reduced staffing and service levels, including cancelling or deferring capital projects," says Deborah Sargent. "The Province is also permitting local governments to borrow from municipal capital reserves interest-free with a five-year payback, if necessary."

"Council will continue to lobby the Province to expand the property tax deferment program and increase the homeowner grant to people who've lost income due to the pandemic," the Mayor adds.

The City has until May 14 to finalize 2020 property tax rates and use fees. At this time, the due date for property tax payments is July 2, and late penalties for property tax payments won't be charged until Oct. 1.

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