

## Staff Report

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**Report To:** City Council  
**Report From:** Tim Simmonds, City Manager  
**Meeting Date:** March 15, 2021  
**Report Code:** CM-21-003  
**Subject:** City Actions and Decisions Implemented Re: COVID-19  
from January 15, 2021 – March 12, 2021

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### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CM-21-003 respecting City Actions and Decisions Implemented respecting COVID-19 from January 15, 2021 – March 12, 2021, City Council directs staff to bring forward by-laws to:

1. Continue the rent relief program to City tenants, as outlined in the report, through to March 31, 2021; and
2. Authorize the Mayor and Clerk to execute a Transfer Payment Agreement with the Minister of Transportation for the Safe Restart Agreement (SRA) - Phase 2 Municipal Transit Funding.

### Highlights:

- City Hall and other City Facilities re-opened to the public on February 22, 2021.
- Facility rentals have resumed which helps mitigate revenue loss due to the Pandemic
- Harry Lumley Bayshore Arena is now serving in two capacities; Field Hospital and Vaccination Hub
- The City has received approximately \$312,000 in Safe Restart Funding and \$225,000 for transit, both for COVID-19 related costs.

## **Strategic Plan Alignment:**

Strengthening our community through sound leadership.

## **Background:**

All decisions and actions made by Council and staff are fundamentally anchored to the principle of – Safety First.

This report focuses on the actions and information from January 15, 2021 to March 12, 2021.

City Council and staff have been listening to Federal and Provincial authorities and consulting with Public Health Agencies since the beginning of this crisis. City staff also consult with the County and other lower-tier municipal officials regularly, follow updates and information provided from our municipal and professional associations.

Council requested a more detailed description of how the Administration has made decisions throughout the pandemic. The administration has adopted a Multi-Point Action Plan (Attachment 1) toward proactively mitigating and suppressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and guide the day-to-day emergency response during the pandemic. The planning model uses data from multiple sources to aid future forecasting. The Action Plan addresses both internal responsibilities and external responsibilities both short and long-term to guide its day-to-day actions.

## **Analysis:**

### **Health & Safety**

Grey Bruce returned to the Provincial color-coded response framework Yellow Zone “Protect” as of February 16, 2021. In preparation for re-opening City facilities, the Health and Safety Department has recirculated the City’s COVID-19 Safety Plan and Employee Manual to all staff; as well as reviewed and updated the City’s COVID-19 protocol, such as mask/face covering requirements, disinfecting schedule, and signage. Shortly after February 16, the Province moved Grey Bruce into the Green protect zone. This did not impact the city’s reopening as nearly all precautions and procedures continue to apply to “Green” Zone safety protocols. One change is that some gathering limits did increase.

The City has implemented an online self-screening tool since December 7, 2020. It has been proved to be more reliable and convenient than the paper forms or the computer sign-in acknowledgment. Employees are compliant with our daily self-screening requirement, with more than a 90 per cent compliance rate. The City has been working closely with the Grey Bruce Public Health for updating our self-screening criteria in response to the new COVID-19 variants of concern in Ontario. We maintain constant communication with all employees for any changes in protocol. Employees are continued to be accommodated for their individual needs. We recognize the potential negative consequences to mental health from the pandemic, employees are reminded that supports are available, such as the Employee Assistance Program and other local/provincial services.

A management learning opportunity has been offered via webinar to all management employees through the TEND Organization. The webinar is entitled, "Steady Hand at the Helm: Effective Leadership During Times of Uncertainty". The webinar session focuses on chronic stress, trauma exposure, and heavy workloads which can make balancing workplace wellness far more complicated and – as research shows – even more critical.

## **Public Works**

Winter Control – An extra precaution taken during the latest lockdown was to rent a site office trailer to house the seasonal staff in an effort to maintain social distancing between employees and limit the number of employees in any given gathering area and washroom facility.

Water Distribution, Waste Water Collection, Water Treatment, and Waste Water Treatment went back to teams in an effort to reduce the possibility of COVID-19 infecting an entire crew. Procedures remain in effect as the previous lockdown. At the end of the lockdown, staff returned to regular status.

The County held a meeting with all the PW departments responsible for Winter Control to see how Owen Sound could collaborate in the case of an emergency where a community's workforce was incapacitated by COVID-19. While nothing formal was put in place it was agreed that each community would be able to provide assistance in some capacity.

## **Community Services Planning & Heritage**

The Development Team is moving forward on development applications and pre-consultations. Pre-consultations have been very busy.

The Official Plan update is ongoing. The next public engagement session along with a special meeting of Council is March 15, 2021.

Staff is working in the office with most developer meetings happening electronically.

Applications are accepted via email, dropbox, or by special appointment.

New guidelines for three of the CIP programs have been completed: Accessibility, Façade and Structural Improvement and Business Start up.

## **Building**

Again, under the most recent lockdown, there were no changes in timelines or types of permits that can be issued. Staff have continued to undertake plan review and permit issuance as well as undertake inspections.

Special health and safety measures are implemented for inspections. In certain circumstances, plumbing inspections are being done virtually.

Building has been busy inspecting the three large projects (Southbridge, Owen Sound Gardens, and Odawa) all currently underway along with other residential and commercial development. Permits have been issued for Buildings H & I at Heritage Grove along with a tenant fit up permit for a Fire House Subs in this location.

Owen Sound Gardens Retirement has installed the exterior walls on the first floor and structural steel is scheduled to arrive next week. After that, the concrete will be placed and block layers will return. This pattern will continue for the next few months.

Southbridge poured footings for the east portion of the building and they anticipate pouring the southeast corner footings also this month. They will then be out of the ground. Underground plumbing is continuing.

New residential development including two new foundations on 7<sup>th</sup> Ave E in the 2500/2600 block, and a new house on 24<sup>th</sup> St W is ongoing.

## **Programs and Facilities Bookings**

All indoor recreation programs have re-opened including minor sports and adult recreation programs. Minor sport groups and adult recreation leagues have all extended their seasons to April 18. The walking program at the Bayshore remains at 20 participants. However, staff are reviewing increasing the maximum based on Provincial protocols. Public skating started on February 24 with a limit of 20 participants. Recent participation data shows participation is full in this program.

Spring, summer, and fall ice allocation are underway.

Facility bookings at the JMRRRC are strong however the impact of the use of the Bayshore for both a field hospital and vaccination hub are having a significant and negative impact on community use and revenue.

## **Parks**

City Parks have remained open with normal snow removal/sanding activity and all normal winter parks maintenance activities are ongoing.

The trail data that has been downloaded since July shows:

- Freedom Trail – 11,820 average users per month
- Fitness Trail – 7,510 average users per month
- Vehicles - Entrance Road – 24,247 average monthly vehicles

Parks and trails have remained an important recreation amenity to the public.

A full report on trail data will be coming forward to a future Community Services Committee in Q2 of this year.

## **Good Cheer Outdoor Rink**

The Good Cheer had been operating under gathering limits with respect to the Yellow and Green Zone protocols and used to the approved capacity during those times. The Good Cheer Rink is now closed for the season due to warmer temperatures and the site will transition to basketball in the coming weeks.

## **Greenwood Cemetery**

The office at Greenwood Cemetery is again open to the public. Internments have continued through the lockdown. The number of people who can attend an outdoor burial service or inurnment is now 100.

## **Facilities and Property**

Staff used the lockdown to complete the painting of all dressing rooms at the Bayshore Community Centre and many other public areas of the building.

An underfloor glycol repair was completed during the lockdown at the JMRRRC. Both rinks are now open.

The building remains under agreement with Grey Bruce Health Services and the Field Hospital remains in place. Staff are also working with and coordinating the installation of a vaccination hub to serve the Grey Bruce Community in the Bayshore Halls.

The installation of railings at the Bayshore is now complete (sections A-P).

The A/V upgrade in the Council chamber was completed on February 26 and the first meeting using the new system was March 1.

## **Tenants at City Facilities**

Due to eligibility requirements for the Federal Rent Relief program that disqualifies businesses operating in municipally owned property, it is recommended that the rent relief program for city tenants introduced in April 2020 and further extended to December 2020 be extended through March 2021. The tenants recommended to receive the city's rent relief through March 31 are; Sisters Cafe, Dr. Akyurekli, Mudtown Station, and Harrison Park Inn.

## **Community Development & Marketing**

There has been ongoing support for small businesses re-opening following the lockdown.

The RTO7 Tourism Response Fund and the Ontario Small Business Support Grant are two programs designed to assist small businesses and tourism stakeholders in recovery and to offset increased operating expenses due to the pandemic. Staff has distributed these funding opportunities to business owners, tourism networks, the Chamber of Commerce, and on Social Media channels.

Tourism and Events Staff continue to plan for an active year with the understanding that travel patterns will be localized similarly to 2020.

SnOwenSound Frolics has just wrapped up a successful campaign that was well suited to the recent stay-at-home order. A re-imagined Savour Owen Sound with a focus on takeout and delivery to assist our local culinary sector began March 1.

### **GBHS Field Hospital**

Council has received regular updates with respect to the status of the field hospital.

The Field Hospital not only creates capacity for Grey Bruce should our hospitals become over capacity, but it also allows surgery to continue at a higher capacity by creating this “safeguard” for the community should the facility be needed. The facility also provides capacity for the province as a whole.

At this time, the epidemiology of the pandemic and roll out of the vaccination program is positively influencing the need for the field hospital however, this safeguard is important as the hospital is running near capacity as it has increased various services to address needs.

Staff from GBHS are working to remove certain items from the field hospital that would shorten the removal time when it is determined that the site can be dismantled. The hospital is in discussions with Ontario Health on the status and will continue to keep the City apprised. GBHS did make a request for funding to assist the City in off setting the revenue lost from the facility. A decision on this request is still pending.

GBHS also consented to the Agreement with the Grey Bruce Public Health Unit establishing a vaccination hub at the Bayshore Community Centre.

At this time, the Field Hospital at the Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre is continuing and the matter will be revisited in April.

### **Vaccination Hub**

At the January 18, 2021, Council meeting, Council authorized the City Manager to execute an agreement with Grey Bruce Public Health respecting the use of the Bayshore as a vaccination hub.

This agreement has been signed by Public Health and provides for the use of the area generally west of the main north south hallway in the Christie Hare rooms and Bay and Sound Rooms. Sixty vaccination pods are in place together with the necessary infrastructure to operate the clinic.

The agreement provided that the City provides access to the wireless network for use by Public Health and covers facility use as well as liability and insurance. City staff from the Facilities, Public works as well as Events have assisted in set up and in preparing and installing signage in preparation for the use. City staff are responsible for the cleaning of the hallways and washrooms for the operation of the hub.

Recognizing the regional nature of the service provided in the hub, the City is to maintain a record of reasonable costs incurred to perform its obligations under the vaccination hub agreement and these are to be submitted to the County of Grey for consideration.

The first day of vaccination at the hub will be March 8, 2021, and the schedule will be dependant on the availability of vaccine.

### **First Responder Vaccinations**

The Owen Sound Fire Service and Owen Sound Police Service have both received first dose vaccinations through the Grey Bruce Health Unit on Saturday, March 6.

### **Financial Implications:**

To date, revenue has been negatively impacted due to the Provincial lockdown. As of the report date, approximately \$135,000 in facility booking revenue has not been realized. However, as the Province has returned Grey Bruce County to the Provincial Yellow Colour Zone, (now Green) facility bookings have resumed. The City has received \$125,000 in safe restart funds (Q4/2020) to mitigate COVID pressures and most recently received an announcement that the City would receive an additional \$187,000 (Attachment 2) For a total of approximately \$312,000. However, Staff will continue analyzing operations for other opportunities to improve the variance, thus using Safe Restart funding as effectively as possible.

Full COVID-19 related expenses including any posted amounts related to the vaccine hub are approximately \$2,000 to date.



Transit continues to be negatively impacted. However, thanks to safe restart funding (Attachment 3) in the amount of \$225,000 the city has funding to offset negative variances.

### **Communication Strategy:**

Update reports in response to the COVID-19 crisis will be submitted to Council bi-monthly.

### **Consultation:**

Senior Leadership Team

CEMC

Health and Safety Coordinator

### **Attachments:**

1. Administrative Multi-Point COVID Action Plan
2. Correspondence Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Steve Clark
3. Correspondence Minister of Transportation, Caroline Mulroney

### **Recommended by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

### **Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Tim Simmonds, City Manager at [tsimmonds@owensound.ca](mailto:tsimmonds@owensound.ca) or 519-376-4440 ext. 1210.