

Mayor Mike Savage statement – March 19, 2020

We've moved to having no in-person media briefings, which seems like a prudent measure in keeping with current directives around social distancing.

So, thank you to media for your cooperation and bear with us as we switch up our format and take questions remotely.

I want to begin by extending my ongoing gratitude to Jacques, Erica and the entire staff team at the municipality who continue to help us manage through these unprecedented times.

We also continue to work to keep the Council team informed and are relying on them as conduits to the concerns faced by residents, service providers and the businesses throughout all of our communities.

A few new things to relay, with many of the details to come from the CAO.

We have heard a variety of concerns around parking enforcement and I am pleased that we are moving today to stop collections at parking meters and discontinue enforcement in time restricted parking spaces. As I mentioned Jacques will provide additional detail

This change reflects the community sentiment that greater flexibility is required to meet parking needs for folks who may be health care workers, people who are choosing to isolate, or those who may be extending support to vulnerable residents.

I am heartened by the number of people who continue to raise concerns for vulnerable members of our community, including those who struggle with homelessness or precarious shelter.

We are working closely with our colleagues at the province to find workable shelter options that meet the need for safe accommodations, including flexibility for isolation if needed. I'm sure we will have more to say on this in the near term.

It's natural to be worried about personal finances and carrying business costs at this time. We are working on measures to help that Jacques will share.

I also want to highlight that I am humbled but not surprised by the number and variety of community initiatives that have sprung up to help seniors, children, health-compromised, and people with accessibility needs through what promises to be an incredibly challenging time.

I want to thank everyone who has come up with ways to keep others company, to help meet their basic needs and to remind us all that kindness and compassion should be the hallmark of the Halifax response.

Here's our CAO Jacques Dube with an operational update.

Speaking notes for CAO Jacques Dubé – Thursday, March 19, 2020

Good afternoon,

A continued thank you to residents and employees for your ongoing efforts to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The municipality is further adjusting delivery for some services, but I would like to again remind everyone that there are no reductions in public safety.

All essential services – including 311, fire, and police, are fully operational and continue to adhere to the most updated guidance and precautions from health officials.

Some of the larger adjustments being made today are as follows:

During this challenging time, we understand the pressure some businesses and residents are facing related to property taxes.

The municipality is currently looking at alternative payment options related to property taxes due April 30, 2020.

To be clear, no decisions have been made yet.

Decisions will be communicated to taxpayers in advance of the deadline and will focus on addressing the needs of businesses and residents.

At this time, we will not be speculating on the options being considered.

I can assure you that this is a priority of the municipality and we will let taxpayers know as soon as a decision is made.

Beginning tomorrow morning, Halifax Transit ferry service will be reduced to 30-minute service on both routes.

Access-a-Bus passengers are being asked to limit trip requests to essential trips only, including doctor's appointments, medical services and dialysis, and prescription pick-ups.

Residents and visitors who are feeling ill are asked to please avoid using all transit services until their health has returned to normal.

With regards to parking, parking fees at meters in the municipality have been waived and HotSpot will not accept payment until further notice.

The enforcement of hourly spaces and monthly permit parking has also been suspended for the time being.

Residential permits will still continue to be enforced, however if your residential permit has recently expired, you will not receive a ticket.

We are still asking residents to please be considerate of the duration of parking throughout the municipality.

With the closure of all Customer Service Centres, an online service to receive construction permit applications is under development and is expected to be operational early next week.

The application deadline for Community Grants Programs, as well as the Tax Relief for Non-Profit Organizations program has been extended until May 15.

As we continue to remind employees, there are no changes to municipal employee payroll. Payments to vendors and suppliers will continue, as well as procurement tenders.

You can continue to stay fully up to date on all updates from the municipality on our website at halifax.ca/coronavirus.

Thank you again for your efforts to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

I'll now hand it over to Assistant Chief Erica Fleck.

Remarks from Assistant Chief Erica Fleck

Our Emergency Operations Centre will continue to operate and adjust daily due to issues that arise.

These issues are addressed daily with our Senior Leadership team.

We are currently working on coordinating efforts for volunteers and those in need for deliveries etc. and we will have more information on this by Monday.

We have also developed a community info sheet that we will be sending out and posting on library doors, rec centers etc for those of our citizens who do not have ready access to internet on a daily basis.

Again, we encourage you to check on your neighbours, friends and family as it can be lonely being self isolated, and we need to ensure that everyone's well being is monitored.