

## **Mayor's Public Address – April 27, 2020**

*\*transcription of video recording*

Good afternoon everyone. This is Mayor Maya Tait for Monday April the 27th and I'm here from Chambers today to give you a bit of an update.

I do wish to begin by recognizing that we are on the territory of the T'Sou-ke nation and I'm here today with gratitude. I'd like to start by sending out a happy 100th birthday greeting to Mr. Ed Banner, congratulations and all the best wishes for the next 100 years. Our fire department will be joining the drive-by parade this afternoon which starts at 2 o'clock so for anyone out and about you may find it a little bit busier than normal in the Church Road Wadams Way area.

Secondly, I would also like to acknowledge that the BC Achievement Foundation, which has been doing community recognition for the past 17 years, today we are honored to recognize one of our own and that is our retired Fire Chief Steve Sorensen. Congratulations and thank you so much for all that you are doing in our community all that you have done and all you continue to do.

Some of the updates today - tonight at 7 o'clock our regular council meeting will proceed, and it will be done via Zoom. It will be recorded so as soon as everything is completed the link and the zoom recording will be posted on to the district website. As always council is available to hear from you at [council@sooke.ca](mailto:council@sooke.ca). Tonight's regular agenda will include reports on proposed budget amendments. As mentioned previously council did adopt the five-year financial plan however, immediately upon an adoption we directed our staff to come back to find ways to find some savings given that all the planning for this budget was done in a pre-COVID 19 times. Tonight, they have prepared a number of recommendations for council to consider. We also here have recommendations on how we may process development applications while complying with provincial orders and meeting the transparency and accountability of land use and development. Those reports are now online, and you'll find them on our website.

Reminder that street-sweeping is now underway. If possible, please do not park on the street and if it isn't possible when you do hear the sweepers coming through your neighborhood please move your vehicles temporarily so that they can get to every corner of the street.

Some of you may know that a temporary shelter for Sooke's vulnerable population will be opening in the near future. This effort is a result of the ministerial order to provide services during COVID-19 and to also create an environment that helps facilitate distancing while providing access to hygiene facilities for all residents including showers, regular hand washing and laundry facilities. This will keep all of us safe together. Multiple community agencies have rallied together to provide the support. The shelter will be staffed 24/7 and has space for 45 people 30 people inside and 15 people outside. I didn't mention it but this will be held at SEAPARC only in the dry floor arena area and access will be limited to that particular area and the adjoining washrooms -nothing to the rest of the facility. Tents are expected to be in the parking lot. Through community outreach efforts all the residents have been identified and the space in the shelter is already spoken for. This space is not available to anyone outside the community of Sooke.

I'd like to give my thanks to BC housing, the Capital Regional District, the SEAPARC staff and their commission, the Sooke shelter society, the Sooke Region Community Health Network, the

coalition to end homelessness. All of these folks have been involved to make this happen. The space is being used because it is currently closed to the public and the shelter is expected to open in the coming days and will run until June the 30<sup>th</sup>. There will be no impact to prevent SEAPARC from opening once the closures of facilities has been lifted. There are funding agreements in place, insurance and all of that has been vetted by CRD staff together with BC Housing.

Safe seniors and strong community program in Sooke - there are openings available for anyone that is 65 plus who would like to participate in the program. There is also the ongoing call for volunteers so please call BC 2-1-1 to register for services. The types of services include prescription pickup, meal preparation, grocery shopping, or just a friendly call or check-in. For any of you that may have seniors living in Sooke you may also want to check in about what's available and how to connect people to the necessary services.

Our library is now issuing library cards online and have increased access to e-resources including the online ebooks, audiobooks, magazines and more. I'm also pleased to share with you that the building permit for our new library that will be located on Wadams Way has been issued and approved. The construction will be tendered, evaluated, and awarded now that the pre-qualification period has closed. This was extended by one month. It was originally set to close March 23rd but that was right when all of the provincial orders were coming into place, so the construction industry had requested an extension. We are excited to share that ten bids have been received. we expect construction to start in the second or third quarter with the brand-new branch opening twelve to eighteen months after that. We will provide more details once we learn more about this. The lease at the current location has also been extended so there will be no disruption to service. Many thanks to the Vancouver Island Regional Library board.

On another note, I am pleased to share that the expansion for our West Coast Family Medical Clinic is underway. Permits been issued and the renovations are happening there as we speak, as well as the hiring of the staff to progress the expansion of our facility there.

Just returning to SEAPARC for a moment they have opened up some registration for summer programming so just go online to see what is available. We're hoping that their programming can proceed and the SEAPARC staff are closely monitoring provincial orders and will do all that they can accordingly.

The golf course is scheduled to open on May 1st with some changes to how services are delivered there, there won't be any beverages sold on site for example but the fares can be done either at the location or over the phone. There are some changes that are being worked out now to comply with social distancing to also keep all of the staff and players safe.

Some Bylaw and Park reminders - a reminder that backyard burning remains prohibited. This is a provincial order that is in effect from the Ministry of Environment, however small campfires and contained rings remain permitted. Please use clean split wood only and do not burn any garden waste. I'm also requesting please don't dump any yard waste or garbage in our public spaces, green space, or other areas. This will be subject to a fine under the community parks regulation bylaw. I might ask that if you are using any single use gloves or masks please take those home and discard them in your own garbage facility. Also any dog waste, please pack it in and pack it out. I've heard that some folks are uncomfortable using the bear resistant garbage bins because of how you need to open them, so in that case it's best just to take your own garbage home and just not to leave it beside the can.

Our road maintenance contractor and park staff are continuing to complete essential work, please help them practice social distancing by not approaching them directly with questions or concerns. We just ask that you respect their space while they're working.

If you've been to say, John Muir Elementary for example, we have needed to rope off or tape off the donation bins that are there for Diabetes Canada as they are unable to pick up the bins and they've asked for our assistance. The bins are closed but there's been a lot of dropped off items placed beside the bins and in the adjacent space. Unfortunately, all of these items had to be taken to the landfill so just a reminder please keep these items at home until the services reopen. You may also find a way to connect with some of our local thrift shops as they are finding ways to accept items.

On to business - our Chamber of Commerce as you may know has launched a "Better Buy Sooke" campaign. This is an opportunity not to just to buy a gift card but to also shop online local. There are now over 50 businesses participating and when you go to "Better Buy Sooke" you'll see the various business listed there. A click on their logo will take you straight into their own virtual shop so it's a great way to shop local while also enjoying the online features.

We have heard now that there are plans in the works with a safe reopening of BC restaurants. BC health officials are exploring ways to ease social contract restrictions as long as the number of COVID 19 transmissions continue to drop. A cross-section of restaurant operators are developing plans to reopen the food industry according to a media release from the BC Restaurant and Food Services Association. A preliminary plan is expected next week and also the federal government has announced 62.5 million of new funding for the Canadian Seafood Stabilization Fund.

The Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program is a rent relief program for qualifying businesses for up to three months. This program could reduce business rent by up to 75% and it's funded in partnership by the federal and provincial governments. Application for the province's BC emergency benefit for workers opens on May the 1<sup>st</sup>. The benefit here is to further help British Columbians worried about paying their bills. It is a one-time \$1000 payment for those whose work has been affected by COVID 19.

A reminder that our district here is continually updating the COVID 19 information page on our website with all the information so it's a great way to find things in one place. The Sooke Region Chamber is also putting together a lot of solid information and are monitoring the updates regularly.

Advocacy work continues at both the provincial and federal level from local elected officials from across the province. There is a push to have the property tax deferral extended to more residents - right now it's families with children or just those 55 plus. There is a minimum equity requirement required in either situation. There is an online tool that you could use to check eligibility. You will require a recent mortgage loan statement and your BC assessment information. Since there are still some folks that will not qualify there is an advocacy push occurring there as well as to see emergency funding reach municipalities. All of that is available either on the UBCM website or the FCM website if you're interested in seeing what local elected officials across the country have been pushing for.

On that note I wish to close off today - please stay safe Sooke. Keep healthy, stay strong, and remember to keep six feet between us remaining calm and cool. Thank you so much.