

Mayor's Public Address – May 11, 2020

* Transcription of video recording *

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Territory of the T'Sou-ke Nation upon whose lands our municipality resides.

Happy Belated Mother's Day! I trust that everyone had a lovely day in the sunshine.

Many thanks to our front line and essential workers, families and neighbours for looking out for one another and all the kindness and compassion that continues to spread through our community.

DISTRICT & COUNCIL

- **Council meetings** – the Regular Committee of the Whole Meeting on May 19th will once again be held in Council Chamber. Committee of the Whole meetings are on the third Monday of each month at 1:00 pm, unless after a long weekend where the meeting is pushed to Tuesday afternoon. Council meetings will happen in Council Chambers after May 19 as well on their regular schedule of the second and four Monday of each month at 7:00 pm. There will be no public allowed due to an inability to meet social distancing parameters and WorkSafe requirements. The public will be able to participate through written comment in accordance with Ministerial Order 139. Council Agenda's and links to live videos are available on the District website prior to the meetings. Council is always available by email: council@sooke.ca
- **District of Sooke Return to Work Plan** – District staff are finalizing their 'Return to Work Plan and Operating Procedure'. The District is planning for a soft-opening to the public on June 1st with safety measures in place for staff and residents. The District Hall will be open for tax payment and application drop offs only and the public will be restricted to the foyer of the building only. The majority of District staff that are located at the District Hall will remain working from home at this point and will assist via phone, email or video (where available).
- **Municipal Taxes** – While several different payment options are available, the District encourages a touchless approach – please explore making your payment online or dropping off, or mailing in, a cheque. If you do plan to come in to the Municipal Hall to pay your taxes this year, please allow some extra time as the number of residents allowed into the reception area will be limited.
- **The Fire Department** – the 2020 recruit training program has continued with an altered delivery model to allow recruits to continue their training in a responsible, social distancing fashion. The class has now been split up into two groups – this has placed additional responsibility on the Fire Department but allows for new recruits to maintain their training momentum. The drive-by birthday program has been a great success and is putting smiles on faces and helping residents celebrate together.

- **Reminder that Backyard Burning is still prohibited**, small campfires in contained rings, no bigger than two feet across are still permitted – clean, split wood only, no garden waste. There are many residents who are still burning yard debris – please compost your debris responsibly – or utilize the services of one of the Sooke businesses.

BC'S (CAREFUL) RESTART PLAN ANNOUNCED May 6th

- **Residents are asked to remain vigilant** by continuing to: wash hands, stay home when sick, clean surfaces – and stay 6 feet away from others, whenever possible. This applies from now until Phase 4 of BC's Restart Plan. COVID-19 will not be entirely behind us until there is a vaccine, or herd immunity. If transmission rates remain low, the province's phased approach will ease restrictions and aims to restart the economy.
- **Four Phases** – The Plan is a phased approach. We are currently in Phase 1; and, heading into Phase 2 after the May long weekend.
- **Premier's Town Hall** – following the Restart Plan announcement, the Premier, and Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Carole James, held a live virtual town hall on Facebook to answer questions. Check out John Horgan's' Facebook page to learn more and get clarity on common concerns and questions regarding the plan.
- **Gathering in small groups** of two to six people to allow some interaction and social time with friends and family is recommended, with caution and common sense. **Keep your exposure bubble small.**
- **Businesses, services and restaurants** are developing plans to re-open safely as part of Phase 2, as long as they can meet sufficient distancing measures. This includes health services and elective surgeries, counselling, hair salons and spas, pubs, museums, art galleries, etc. Opening of hotels and resorts and select entertainment (such as smaller symphonies), are outlined in Phase 3.
- **Schools and childcare** – schools are expected to return to a 'new normal' by September 2020. A gradual approach to getting back to regular classroom instruction has been presented. A voluntary, partial return to safely get some kids back to school before the summer is being explored by SD62 – more details will follow once plans are announced. It will not be mandatory. School districts are also exploring alternate ways to help the graduates of 2020 celebrate and mark this significant milestone in a meaningful way. Reopening more childcare centres/facilities is identified in Phase 2 – again, with additional precautions.
- **Recreation centres** – opportunities are being explored by the BC Recreation and Parks and Association for community leisure centres, including summer camps and activities for kids to continue. The CRD will announce updates about use of the SEAPARC Leisure Complex once plans are in place. SEAPARC's DeMamiel Creek Golf Course was opened for public use on May 1, 2020, with significant steps to support golfer and staff safety.
- **Sooke Parks** – District of Sooke Parks were reopened to the public on May 1st with recommendations in place for safe use. Thank you for using the parks respectfully and packing out your waste. Sooke Parks play structures remain closed until further notice.

- **Select Provincial Parks will re-open on May 14th for day use only** - and residents are being asked to explore nearby parks and greenspaces. Travelling too far outside of your community – and all non-essential travel – is still being discouraged. Broader reopening of overnight camping in BC Parks may transpire in Phase 3 (June or July). BC Parks Discover Camping reservation website is expected to be in operation May 25th with information on what parks will be opening. Despite cautions for residents to remain close to home and visit parks that are close, this will undoubtedly result in increased traffic through Sooke, as Greater Victoria residents travel to visit BC parks west of us. It is important to note that not all BC Parks to the west of Sooke will re-open for day use on May 14 – French Beach is, but China Beach and Botanical Beach (both in the Juan de Fuca Provincial Park), are not scheduled for re-opening for day use.
- **No large crowd-style events** of more than 50 people.

COMMUNITY CARING

- **Temporary Shelter for Sooke's vulnerable population** – the temporary shelter at SEAPARC has been operating for almost a week and is a result of a Ministerial Order to provide services during COVID-19. The shelter helps create an environment that facilitates distancing and provides access to hygiene facilities for residents. Big thank you to SEAPARC staff and Homeless Programs Coordinator, Jen Wilde and staff, who are operating the facility. Please be respectful of these members of our community who are seeking temporary refuge in the space to help keep everyone safe.
- We have needed to step up security and RCMP patrols to protect the volunteers, workers and residents using the facility from motorists driving by in trucks and cars verbally abusing, threatening and physically abusing those using or providing the service. Please stop!
- **Thank you to the Sooke Lions** who showed support for healthcare workers last Friday – three Sooke Lions Clubs lined Sooke road last Friday to show their respect and gratitude for our essential workers.
- **Visit [BetterBuySooke.ca](https://www.betterbuysooke.ca)** to support local businesses when online shopping! Tell all your friends about our new online shopping mall.
- Sooke Food CHI along with Sooke Garden Club and Transition Sooke are partners with the **Sooke backyard garden project**: sookefoodchi.ca - then click on the My Fed Farm Garden.
- From their website: “We are excited to be partnering with the [Food Eco District \(My Fed Farm\)](#) along with [Transition Sooke](#) and the [Sooke Garden Club](#) to be able to provide residents in Sooke with free garden kits! Together we are looking to support our fellow community members by assisting Sooke Region residents with developing their own food gardens for access to fresh, healthy foods! We support families and laid off workers by providing home-based start up food gardens using simple and affordable supplies. While the supply chain of food to the island has not been impacted by COVID-19, the mass layoffs present a tougher challenge in the months ahead. If you live in the Sooke region,

you can use the [intake form](#) located on the FED FARM website, and they will pass on your information to our team to get you growing.”

- Sooke Country Market opened virtually on May 2nd. Search Sooke Country Market and on the website there is a link to the online shopping site.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- A reminder to check the Covid-19 information pages on the District website regularly for updates.

Together, Greater Victoria Mayors are meeting weekly now to collaborate, share ideas and to provide a consistent approach to local government businesses. We continue to work with the Province.

Thank you all,

Stay safe Sooke

Wash your hands!