



City of Richmond

Report to Council

To: Richmond City Council

Date: March 18, 2020

From: Jerry Chong
Director of Finance

File: 03-1240-01/2020-Vol
01

Re: Cessation of Cash Transactions During Covid-19 Outbreak

Staff Recommendation

That the City of Richmond ceases to accept cash transactions at City Hall until September 30, 2020.

Jerry Chong
Director of Finance
(604-276-4064)

REPORT CONCURRENCE	
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER	
SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS:
N/A	
APPROVED BY CAO	

Staff Report

Origin

With the current outbreak of Covid-19, the City is developing social distancing protocols to ensure the health and safety of all City Hall staff and patrons. Currently, the City offers a variety of payment methods that do not require a patron to be physically at City Hall to conduct the transaction except where customers choose to pay by cash. This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #5 Sound Financial Management:

Accountable, transparent, and responsible financial management that supports the needs of the community into the future.

Analysis

Starting from January 29, 2020, the City issued flat rate and metered utility invoices totaling over \$45.2M. Of this amount, \$27.4M has been collected to date through online and in person payments. Approximately 914K or 3.33% of the payments (1,333 transactions) were made in person at City Hall with cash.

Cash transactions raise a number of concerns during the current outbreak:

- Cash payments require taxpayers to venture out of the safety of their homes and to stand in multiple line ups at financial institutions and at City Hall with other like-minded individuals. This exposes all to a higher risk of contracting or spreading the virus, especially since many patrons continue to stand too close to one another.
- Cash is a very unsanitary commodity as it has been touched by many strangers and is rarely, if ever, sanitized. Cash handling exposes all individuals to germs and therefore, should be minimized during current conditions.
- The City relies heavily on the armoured car company to pick up and deliver our daily deposits to the bank. While we currently have this service, we cannot be guaranteed that the service will persist as all companies are concerned about the health and safety of their staff and may suspend services for a period of time. If this happens, the City will be exposed to the risk of having to hold excess amounts of cash on our premises.
- While some seniors prefer transacting with cash, they are considered an "at risk group" and should be discouraged from coming into City Hall.

By temporarily eliminating cash transactions until September 30th, it would encourage taxpayers to use other payment methods offered by the City including:

- Online and telephone payment at financial institutions
- Online credit card payment on the City's website

- Cheque payment using Canada Post
- Cheque payment using the City's 24hr drop box

This will result in:

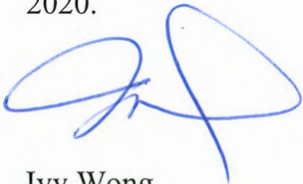
- Improving social distancing as fewer patrons will need to be at City Hall
- Reducing patron's risk of theft as they will not be carrying large sums of cash
- Reducing City's risk of having large amounts of cash on site.
- Allowing staff to monitor patron's feedback on the decision and to assess the viability of a future cashless City Hall.
- Supporting anti-money laundering initiatives.
- Changing taxpayer's practices of utilizing cash payments

Financial Impact

None

Conclusion

That the City of Richmond cease to accept cash transactions at City Hall until September 30, 2020.



Ivy Wong
Manager, Revenue
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