

CKL COVID19 Update February 17, 2020

CKL Council shared with the public what their plans are going forward during a very brief meeting lasting 32 minutes this morning.

All councillors were present except Doug Elmslie who has recently returned from a cruise and was self-isolating.

CAO Taylor began the meeting by sharing where the City is and how they believe they are managing this rapidly changing situation. Taylor said that the City “was tracking events from a multitude of sources.”

Taylor shared that the City has activated its Pandemic Response Team and as chair, Taylor’s priorities moving forward are the following:

1. Health and safety of City employees and CKL residents
2. Maintaining essential services
3. Responding to an ever changing situation in a timely and appropriate manner

Taylor believes that the local paramedics, fire services and police departments are well positioned to managed an extended emergency. Taylor also stated again that the priority goal of the Pandemic Response Team is to maintain essential services.

With Council meetings cancelled till May 1, Taylor eluded to the fact that Council will have to temporarily transfer to the Response Team some of their decision making powers.

Fire Chief Pankhurst was the next to present, informing Council as chair of the Emergency Control Group that meetings had begun on Monday March 16, 2020 to better coordinate fire, public health, CKL police and the OPP.

Pankhurst said the group is making decisions about what critical services will continue to be offered and what services will be shut down.

Chief Pankhurst also addressed public concern that an “emergency” had not been officially declared by the City. The Chief said point blank that officially an emergency cannot be declared by the City until they have exhausted all of their resources and are on the cusp of being overwhelmed by whatever the situation is. Pankhurst said that in regards to the COVID19 pandemic we are not even close to being at a stage where an emergency declaration would be promulgated.

The City Communications Department then stepped up to the microphone to share the following:

1. The local Health unit now has a dedicated page on the pandemic with information regarding on-line self screening
2. The City has a dedicated pandemic page at kawarthalakes.ca/covid19
3. The City has a dedicated phone line with up to date information about the City and its responses to COVID19 at 705 324-9411 ex 4000

Mayor Letham was last to speak and began by sharing a message from Premier Ford that said, “that there would not be a provincial shutdown and most businesses would remain open. No expense would be spared fighting the pandemic.”

Letham then provided a detailed list of City services that will be top priorities during the pandemic response and they include:

1. Municipal water
2. Road services
3. Spring flooding response
4. Lindsay Transit
5. Curbside garbage and recycling
6. Limo Service for medical visits only

Letham also shared some immediate City closings that caught some present off guard:

1. All City buildings and service centres are closed until April 5
2. Landfill sites are closing as of end of business today
3. Council and civic boards will cease to operate until May 1
4. Mayors and councillors will not be attending any public meeting until May 1

Victoria Manor will continue to operate with an “essential visitors only policy.”

Mayor Letham strongly shared a message from Ross Memorial Hospital saying “that unless you have been referred by Public Health don’t just go to the hospital. You will be turned away.”

Letham concluded his statement by saying, “We must make sacrifices for the most vulnerable in our society. I really hope that we are overreacting. City plans are expected to change hourly so stay tuned.”

The floor was then opened to questions from Council and there were a number.

Councillor Dunn was concerned about the delegation of council power to the CAO and wondered how that is going to work. Taylor responded that for the next six weeks the power will allow Taylor to make critical procurements, hire and fire staff and sign off on critical land transactions. The Mayor assured Dunn that there would be more discussion on the power structure moving forward at the Emergency Council meeting on Thursday March 19.

Councillor Yeo wanted to know if building inspectors would continue to be available. Taylor suggested that with alterations for staff safety “likely yes.”

Councillor Dunn wanted to know if planning timelines will be extended six weeks for projects currently being processed by the City. Taylor said “any business in the queue will hopefully move forward.”

Councillor Yeo wanted to know if meetings could be done via teleconference. Mayor Letham said the Clerk was investigating that and hoped to have answers forthcoming.

Councillor Ashmore completed the questions wondering if the City is prepared to do something about rent payments for City housing and tax installment payments from individuals whose work has been impacted by COVID19. Taylor said in the short term it will be “business as usual but if the pandemic stretches out and creates ongoing hardships we will revisit the issue.”

Council will meet one more time on Thursday and then public meetings will not recommence until May 1, 2020.