



CITY OF
ELIZABETH CITY
HARBOR OF HOSPITALITY *North Carolina*

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council
FROM: Rich Olson, City Manager
REF: City Manager's Weekly FYI ~ August 7, 2020
COPY: Email Distribution

1. Starting Tuesday, August 11th, City Hall Customer Service will reopen to walk-in customers since closing the lobby in late March due to the coronavirus outbreak. The City will observe and institute several protocols in keeping with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommended guidelines for businesses and employers and with the most recent Executive Order from Governor Cooper. All employees, customers and visitors will continue to be required to sanitize their hands prior to entering the service area and wear face coverings for the duration of the visit. In addition to these personal safety measures, all individuals will be subject to the COVID-19 Health Screening Checklist, consent to a temperature check, and guided access through the customer service area. Access to the City Hall building will be one-way, entering through the East Colonial Avenue (front) doors and exiting by the north doors at the rear of the building. Customer off-street and on-street parking will be available as usual along the Colonial Avenue right-of-way and in the parking lot at the rear. The reopening will allow service application and COVID Agreement appointments, while at the same time allowing other customers to make in-person cash payments. The maximum number of persons allowed in the service area is nine, including any employees assisting customers. Due to the limitations of space and health concerns, only actual customers conducting business are encouraged to enter. The public is also advised that the City Hall lobby will close daily between 12:30 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to allow for more thorough disinfecting and sanitizing. Customers are strongly encouraged to use the City Hall drive-thru, kiosk or online portal



for quick easy pay options. In order to maximize efficiencies and level of service, the satellite location at 407-B South Griffin Street will be closing today at 5:00 p.m. until further notice.

2. Beginning at 3:00 a.m., August 4, 2020, the City began experiencing the effects of Hurricane / Tropical Storm Isaias. The City experienced a major power outage starting about 5:30 a.m. At that time, the City had roughly 5,000 customers without power. Most of the outages were caused by tree branches that had fallen on lines causing defaults at the respective substations. Once the breaker trips, the City electrical crews must inspect all the electrical lines on the circuit before they can retrip the breaker. By 11:00 a.m., we were able to restore power to approximately half of the customers who experienced an outage. The City had two electrical poles that were blown over at the Pritchard Street substation. This section of line had to be repaired by setting two anchor poles to the two blown over poles. This work was completed by 2:00 p.m. and most customers regained power. However, the City had several small areas where individual service lines had to be repaired. By 5:00 p.m., power was fully restored to the entire city. Tropical storm Isaias produced little rain water. The City's official water gauge only reflected 1.5 inches of rain. The problem that concerned staff the most was the high storm surge that we experienced. The storm surge was the highest in my 17-years as City Manager. Many of the old timers said only during Hurricane Floyd did we experience a greater storm surge. The storm surge affected many residential structures. Public works crews immediately began picking up storm debris. Our first round of debris removal should be completed by end-of-day today. In the past, we have seen that our citizens spend the weekend bring out debris to the curbside. On Monday, we will begin our second round of debris pickup and should have it completed by August 14, 2020. We do not anticipate that we will increase any overtime picking up debris.
3. City staff, in coordination with on-call engineering consultant, Kimley-Horn, is in the process of finalizing an analysis of the localized flooding concerns at the Riverside Avenue / Flora Street intersection. During an upcoming Council work session, staff will present the analysis including solution alternatives to reduce standing water in this intersection. These alternatives include a phased approach to alleviating the situation. As part of normal stormwater operations, staff will be proceeding with implementation of Phase 1, upon completion of the engineering work. Phase 1 includes installation of a check valve within the pipe towards the end where the pipe discharges into the river. Phase 1 also includes installation of screens / grates on the inlets and pipe end to prohibit beaver, nutria, and / or muskrats from entering the storm drainage system in that location. Phase 1 will cost approximately \$10,000, but should provide some immediate relief and allow for a clearer understanding of how much of the standing water is from the river and

how much is from runoff. You may recall a similar solution was implemented at Shepard Street some time back. Unfortunately, a critter chewed a hole in the check valve rendering it useless. Staff believes the proposed Phase 1 solution from the Riverside Avenue / Flora Street analysis is also applicable to the Shepard Street location. As such, the final design and a contractor for both locations will be pursued simultaneously. The key difference to this design is the installation of grates on the inlets and pipe end.

4. The City of Elizabeth City 2020-21 Business Improvement Grant program is open and accepting applications. The first round deadline is September 1st at midnight. The grants have proven successful in spurring economic development and improvements to the City's building inventory, especially in the downtown area. \$80,000 has been approved for the program for the 2020-21 fiscal year, with \$60,000 being designated specifically for downtown properties and \$20,000 designated for properties outside of the downtown Central Business District. Projects must have a reasonable timetable for completion within the fiscal year. Grants for projects that cannot be started and reasonably completed during the current fiscal year may not be recommended for approval. Please read guidelines to understand what is required to be submitted as part of your application. Below is a summary of what must be included in an application packet:

- Application with all information provided and clearly legible
- Proof of Commercial Lease (if applicant is not property owner or if applicant is requesting scoring based on a new tenant)
- Signed and Notarized Permission from Property Owner (if applicant is not property owner)
- Before photos, preferably in digital format
- Itemized bids from at least two (2) licensed contractors, including supplier cost estimates
- Proposed floor plan
- Project timetable
- Inspection reports from the City of Elizabeth City Inspections Department and Fire Marshal, if applicable
- Approval by the Historic Preservation Commission for the project, if applicable (can happen concurrently)
- Verification of Commercial zoning and/or land use
- City of Elizabeth City Business Registration

Grant program guidelines, application, and scoring rubric can be found on the City's website by clicking [HERE](#). Application and guidelines are located at the bottom of the page and on the top-right sidebar. For additional information, the BIG program contact person is Deborah Malenfant, Elizabeth City Downtown, Inc., 252-338-4104, elizabethcitydowntown@embarqmail.com.

Elizabeth City Downtown, Inc. annually reports downtown public and private investment information to its accrediting agency – the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center. From July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020, there was \$9.765 million in private investment in downtown and \$4.324 million in public investment in downtown -- that is over \$14 million. This investment includes property purchases; building improvements; repairs, and maintenance. Information was collected via public record information, property owner verification, visual documentation, and estimates. Although there have been business closures in downtown during the past year, including the closure of two financial institution branch facilities, there was a net positive gain of 8 new businesses.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City will meet in Regular Session on Monday, August 10, 2020, beginning at 7:00 p.m. Due to the Governor's Executive Order, this meeting will not be open to the public; however, it will be live streamed on the City's website at <http://www.cityofec.com> as well as on Channel 11. Any member of the public who wishes to have their comments heard by the Council may submit them to the City Clerk at aonley@cityofec.com to have them read into the record. The Clerk will accept comments until 6:45 p.m. on Monday, August 10th. Please remember to include your name and address.