



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 ~ May 15, 2020
COPY: Email Distribution

1. On Tuesday, Purchasing Manager Randy Lassiter received the first delivery of the City's smart meters. This week's shipment represents the first 1,200 residential meters of the 13,580 total meters we are due to receive over the next few months. The backbone hardware and communication devices, including handhelds, scanners, mounting kits, and meter switches were also received this week. This ends the fourth week of our Nexgrid smart meter project getting started – and the team has accomplished quite a bit. Today, Electric Utility crews completed the installation of the communication boxes on utility poles throughout the city. The crew will receive training on the meter swap process using the smartphone handheld technology created by our vendor. The Data Processing Division conducted two conferences with City utility billing software vendor Tyler Technologies ensuring historic usage data on the old meters is properly recorded,



updated to the billing software, and customer charges are correct. The division has drafted the installation schedule and blackout dates for Cycles 1 and 2. The schedule is a key component to the mass meter swap process because the can be little to no interruption to the utility billing sequencing. The first meter installations are scheduled to begin June 10, 2020. As a reminder, the City has engaged Georgia-based firm NexGen Utility Solutions to complete the mass installation; City crews will complete meter installation at properties with new construction. Utility customers should look for a flyer in their May / June bills answering a few basic questions about the project and how to contact the City for more information about their new meter.

2. In January 2020, the City began to provide the option to pay utility bills through an external kiosk, located next to our drive-up window at City Hall. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, we've seen the number of individuals utilizing the kiosk grow. In March, we had 277 customers pay at the kiosk; that number grew to 279 in April. We've already had 141 customers use the kiosk through May 11th. Governor Cooper's Executive Order 124 took effect on April 1st; and expires on May 30th, 2020. This Order allows residential customers to delay paying utility bills without accumulating penalties on their balance or becoming eligible for disconnection. Utilization of the kiosk is particularly impressive when taking into consideration the overall drop in on-time payments we've seen since the Governor's Executive Order took effect.
3. The Customer Service department is still implementing the Governor Cooper's Executive Order 124. We know that a large portion of our customers (over 2,000) have been affected by the current pandemic, and this has created a financial strain in getting their utility bills paid. The first part of EO124 requires that no customers are to be disconnected for nonpayment. The second part asks the City to set up a COVID-19 Payment Plan, which will allow customers up to six months to repay charges incurred from March 31, 2020 to May 31, 2020. Customers with balances outstanding prior to March 31, 2020 must be paid immediately. Customers must contact our Customer Service department to make arrangements and sign an agreement no later than June 30, 2020. Failure to do so could result in utility service disconnection if the full balance cannot be paid. For customer convenience, we will be placing a Request for Payment Plan form on our website next Friday. We encourage customers to fill this out, submit the application electronically, and one of our representatives will then contact you with the details of your arrangements.
4. During the January 13, 2020 City Council meeting, Councilman Horton requested that the City Council rename Triangle Park after former Councilwoman Anita Hummer. He cited Mrs. Hummer's passion for Elizabeth City and her extensive service as both a Councilor and community member as deserving of the City to commemorate her as a

living legend. All members of the Council agreed, and after a subsequent public hearing held on January 27, 2020, the City Council unanimously voted to rename the Triangle Park as the "Anita Hummer Park for Children." I am pleased to announce that signage for the



renaming has been erected. Unfortunately, due to the current COVID-19 situation, no ceremony date has been set for the official recognition, but I will be making a formal announcement when the time comes.

5. The City's Raw Water Transmission Line Replacement Project, Phase II, is progressing well. Citizens may recall the City awarded a \$1.04 million contract to Enviro-Tech Unlimited Construction Services last December to replace an almost 8,000-foot section of the water line that connects the City's wells to the Water Treatment Plant. (The City was able to proceed with the project thanks to two Community Development Block Grants worth \$1.07 million; some grant funds are available for project contingency.) On Wednesday, Enviro-Tech and our project engineer, McGill Associates, reported good progress since construction started in mid-March. The project area includes Wellfield Road, just west of the Thunder Road intersection, running eastward onto West Main Street Extension to just past the Jessup Street intersection. Pipe is almost complete to Forest Park Road and work and materials worth almost \$300,000 are complete/delivered. The entire project should be complete late this summer. When done, Phase II will finish the raw water line replacement that began several years ago, making it vital to the steady supply of water for City customers. The City would again like to thank Enviro-Tech, McGill, and our grant agency, the NC Department of Environmental Quality, for making this project a reality.
6. FEMA has released a Notice of Funding Opportunity for \$100 million to the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG). This is part of the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act to purchase personal protective equipment and supplies for fire departments across the country and all its US territories. The Elizabeth City Fire Department has requested \$4,620.00 to purchase additional face masks, gowns, disposable gloves, hand sanitizer and disinfecting supplies. Our personnel use these items when responding to calls that do not require their turnout

gear. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fire Department has had to change some of their protocols for their safety and the safety of our citizens and these items have become part of their standard equipment.



FEMA has stated they plan on starting the award process beginning May 29th.

7. On Wednesday, May 13, 2020, members of the Elizabeth City Police Department along with several other agencies throughout the area came together to honor the staff and residents of Citadel Assisted Living Center, which included a vehicle parade in order to comply with the current COVID-19 restrictions. This event was performed in conjunction with National Nursing Home Week. On Thursday May 14, 2020, employees from Citadel Assisted Living Center returned the goodwill by delivered cookies and drinks to the members of the Elizabeth City Police Department in Honor of National Peace Officers Memorial Week.

8. Successful community beautification requires a community approach and commitment. Community Development is leading that

	<i>Rich, Lisa</i>	<i>Williams, Antonio</i>	<i>Total</i>
New Cases	15	9	24
Closed Cases	20	30	50
Open Cases at start of period	67	55	122
Open Cases at end of period	62	34	96
Violation Activity			

approach, by taking a departmental commitment to code enforcement. In addition to two code enforcement officers on daily patrols, Officer Rich, lrich@cityofec.com, 252-337-6672, Ext, 316 and Officer Williams, awilliams@cityofec.com, 252-337-6672, Ext, 285, the planning and building staff and director are also utilizing their weekly schedules to go out in the field and look for opportunities to improve the City's appearance. Contributing to the effort are other City departments and divisions, including Police, Public Utilities, and Fire. If you or your staff have a code enforcement complaint, please email Carter Thompson, Community Development Director with an address, the nature of your concern and photos if you so choose cthompson@cityofec.com 252-337-6672, Ext 242.

9. Right about now, hundreds of volunteers would be in a state of controlled chaos getting ready for the 2020 NC Potato Festival, which was scheduled for this weekend in downtown Elizabeth City. Carnival rides would be in various stages of setup; barricades would be up; golden potatoes would be hidden; potato peelers would be practicing their peeling techniques; Little Miss Tater Tots would be practicing their pageant waves; appetites would be whetted for street foods; local businesses would be prepping and stocking up for a busy weekend; City staff, law enforcement, and emergency services would be reviewing their plans; and there would be a buzz of high level potato excitement in the air. Unfortunately, the festival has been put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is the first year since the festival was reorganized in 2001 that it will not be held as scheduled. Elizabeth City Downtown, Inc. and NC Potato Festival organizers are currently in a holding pattern awaiting more direction from the State and are working with key festival vendors to determine if, and when, rescheduling is feasible.



UPCOMING EVENTS:

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City will meet in Budget Work Session on Monday, May 18, 2020, beginning at 5:30 p.m. in Council Chambers, located on the second floor of the municipal building at 306 East Colonial Avenue. Due to the Governor's Executive Order, only the Council will be allowed in Chambers; the meeting will not be open to the public. The meeting will stream on Channel 11 and the City's website.