



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 ~ April 17, 2020
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1. In last week's FYI, I reported that the Elizabeth City City Council approved providing initial seed money in the amount of \$52,000 to Elizabeth City Downtown, Inc. (ECDI) for the establishment of the EC Small Business Micro Grant Program. This week, Peter Thomson, Chairman of [The Elizabeth City Area Committee of 100](#) announced that the Committee of 100 would contribute \$26,000 to the fund. The Committee of 100 is a private not-for-profit organization whose mission is the enhancement of the Elizabeth City area's economic development interests. This is the largest grant the Committee of 100 has made in recent years and reflects their strong support of our local small business economy. Downtown business and supporter Workforce Resources contributed \$1,500 to the fund, and an additional \$500 contribution was received from a downtown resident. The micro grant fund now has \$80,000 to help small businesses within the City limits. To date, 31 applications have been received and are in the review process. On behalf of City Council and ECDI, I offer a very sincere "Thank You" to the Committee of 100, Workforce Resources, and the private individual for their contributions to this fund. The program allows for grants of up to \$1,500 for small, independent businesses in Elizabeth City affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The application deadline is April 22nd; however, we encourage applicants to submit their information ASAP. The guidelines and application have been posted on the City's website. Click [HERE](#) -- scroll to the bottom of the page. The application is simple, but does require some diligence on the applicant's part. We encourage businesses to review the guidelines completely and submit applications with as much information as possible. An application can't be reviewed until relevant info is submitted. Do not delay in applying for assistance. There are not unlimited funds. If you are a business and are not sure you qualify or if you have any question, contact the Elizabeth City Downtown, Inc. office at 252-338-4104, 252-340-2784 or email: elizabethcitydowntown@embarqmail.com.

2. On Wednesday, the City received our renewal information for our health insurance coverage for Fiscal Year 2020-2021. The Health Benefits Trust, which is managed by the North Carolina League of Municipalities provided the City with a flat rate for the upcoming year. I have mentioned numerous times in my FYI what an excellent job the City employees have done to manage their health care expenses. The City ended our policy year at 82% claims versus premiums paid. Most groups in the large health insurance pool received a 19.5% increase. We were able to maintain a flat rate due to the efforts of our City employees, as well as the option to use the employee health clinic, which allowed us to lower our utilization. In addition to our health insurance, the City also provides vision, short term, and long-term disability along with basic life insurance. These premiums also remained flat. However, the City did see a small increase in our dental insurances. Our rate went from \$30 to \$31 per month, a 3.3% increase. This is the first rate increase in dental insurance in four years. The renewal numbers are reflected in the Recommended Manager's Budget, which was distributed on April 9, 2020, and posted to the City's website.
3. The City continues to receive updates from our Emergency Management agency. The Control Group met on Wednesday, April 15, 2020, to discuss our State of Emergency operation. There has been no change in our operational awareness for several weeks. We continue to be challenged by the lack of PPEs and other needed supplies; however, things are improving. In our situational update for today, the number of cases in Pasquotank County has increased to 20. Six of those cases remain active while 14 have recovered. Included in the County's cases are seven from the Pasquotank County Correctional Institution. We do not have a breakdown of the number of inmates who have recovered. On Thursday I joined Mayor Parker and Amy Underhill from ARHS to produce a video, which will be available on the City's website shortly. I am encouraged by everything that has transpired over the last two weeks, and believe we have reached the apex of the spread of the disease.
4. On Sunday and Monday, the northeast coastal region experienced an inclement weather event that included heavy rain and strong winds, with 60 miles per hour gusts. The damage to trees and overhead power lines was to be expected.



Several properties within the City received significant loss, including the Elizabeth City-Pasquotank County Parks & Recreation Department George Wood Park (GWP) located along the Camden Causeway. The GWP rests on the south side of the causeway and includes a boardwalk and pier extending into the Pasquotank River. The predawn storm caused a tremendous amount of water and wind into the park. Several boards are loosened or separated from the underpinning altogether, while other sections are partially collapsed in the water. Parks Division Superintendent Jeff Simpson first discovered the damage Wednesday afternoon during a scheduled maintenance visit. Photographs show the destruction. I estimate the cost to repair the damaged sections will be several thousand dollars. However, until department staff and our claims adjuster can launch a boat and access via the riverside, a true estimate is difficult. Additionally, there are concerns about the electrical wiring and overall structural integrity. The damage cannot be repaired by staff. City Liability Analyst Anna Spence has deemed the park unsafe for observers and fishers alike. The park is closed until further notice; signage and barricades were erected informing the public. An insurance claim was filed with the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM) on Thursday; the adjuster is expected to conduct an on-site visit to the park one day next week. All other parks and greenspace areas bore no significant damage other than brush, limbs, and debris.

5. Parks & Recreation departmental staff are exploring the prospect of reopening the Downtown Market this year modified to accommodate large-group congregation restrictions due to COVID-19 while offering growers and consumers of local farm-raised produce and meats community alternatives. I have authorized Senior Coordinator Stacy Williams to explore the would-be market demand and interest from our regional farmers to participate in a drive-through model of our beloved Saturday marketplace. If reception to the idea is positive, the trial market would operate in early May, during midday to late afternoon hours. Pre-paid and prepackaged items for sale may be offered. Realizing that produce purchases are largely decided through a four-sensory test, I have instructed staff to determine how a display and walk-up option can be accommodated.
6. The Elizabeth City Pedestrian Plan, also known as WalkEC, held its first steering committee meeting today. This project is led by the engineering firm Kimley-Horn and funded by a North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) grant. The steering committee includes residents and leaders of local organizations, staff from the Community Development and Public Utilities departments, and officials with NCDOT. Connected via Skype, the committee discussed various strengths, challenges, and opportunities for enhancing walkability in Elizabeth City. WalkEC will launch a survey later this year to receive community input as the team develops its recommendations.

7. On Thursday, Lead for North Carolina Fellow Shom Tiwari attended a virtual training from the Environmental Protection Agency to support his work within the Public Utilities Department. The training offered resources and insights for Shom to conduct a Risk and Resilience Assessment and develop an Emergency Response Plan for the City's drinking water system. This planning will fulfill federal requirements from the 2018 America's Water Infrastructure Act to enhance our preparedness for handling potential threats ranging from hurricanes to cybersecurity attacks.

8. Over the past few weeks, the Public Utilities Department has noticed quite an uptick in bulk item and yard waste pickup requests. They are diligently working to ensure everyone's items are picked up in a timely manner and appreciate our Citizens' patience during this time. Below are some quick tips and answers to commonly asked questions regarding pickup!



- All bulk items are picked up in the order they are received through our main office. Have an item in need of pickup? Please contact the Public Utilities Department and submit a request by calling 252-337-6628.
- Place items at the edge of your property (and not in the street) for fast and safe pickup. Similarly, leaves and pine straw should be placed at the edge of your yard, not the gutter or street.
- Trucks cannot pickup construction debris items such as fencing, shingles, wood, and the like.
- Limbs must be less than four inches in diameter and less than eight feet in length.
- Certain trucks are assigned to pick up certain items. If you feel your item was not picked up in error, you can always give Public Utilities a call and check on your work order.

9. Elizabeth City was recently selected as one of three NC downtown communities to participate in the Main Street America Façade Improvement Grant Program. The Main Street Façade Improvement Grant Program was made possible by a \$746,900 grant from the Historic Revitalization Subgrant Program as administered by the National Park

Service Department of Interior. The Main Street Facade Improvement Grant Program will significantly expand the funds available for façade improvements in rural communities. In each of the four states selected, three Main Street community partners will receive grants for façade improvements in their downtown districts. This is a pretty big deal to be selected to participate in this program on a state and national level. The grants will be administered by Main Street America, who will work directly with the local property owners selected to receive the grants. ECDI will assistance in facilitating the application process and putting the individual grant applications together from our community. Grants are available between \$5,000 and \$25,000. We have a total of \$46,000 available for façade rehabilitation/improvement projects in our community. The grant is geared for “shovel ready” façade improvements for contributing (or eligible to be contributing) properties in the historic district. A five-year preservation agreement is required for any grant less than \$10,001; a five-year covenant agreement is required for grants \$10,001 or above. Please note that although the flier indicates roof work is covered, it is contingent upon it being part of a larger scope of work. The grants are designed for rehabilitation/improvement work, not for deferred general repair/maintenance-type work. Click [HERE](#) for information about the grant and how to apply. For questions or additional information, please contact Deborah Malenfant, Executive Director of ECDI at 252-338-4104 or email elizabethcitydowntown@embarqmail.com.

10. On Wednesday, members of the Elizabeth City Police Department partnered with Chick-Fil-A of Elizabeth City to deliver breakfast to area businesses. Meals were delivered to Lowes, UPS, the US Postal Service Office, and Office Max. These breakfasts were donated by Chick-Fil-A to say thank you to some of the local businesses that remain open during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Elizabeth City Police Department was proud to assist in this endeavor.

