



Beneath the Clocktower

Your Insight into Issues and Events at Duncan City Hall

March 2022

MESSAGE FROM MAYOR STAPLES

With the days becoming a little longer, another winter is ending. The arrival of spring is coupled with the lifting of many pandemic restrictions, and we too are slowly making our way out of our homes, going back into offices, reconnecting with people, and attending events. For many, the pandemic has been a grueling two years that has tested us as individuals, communities, and nations. The world we are re-entering is forever changed and we must go forward.

Adding to this is the reality that we have seen close to 9,000 people move to the Cowichan Valley in the past ten years. This population increase, combined renovations, an overheated real estate market, limited availability of rental housing, and the inability of construction to keep pace, means we are experiencing a housing shortage. Our Council continues to support the development of all types of housing. We have over 115 market housing units currently under construction in the City.

When we look outside of our windows, we can often see others struggling who are unsheltered and unsupported who are feeling disconnection and hopeless. Some are caught in the cycle of addiction, others are dealing with mental health issues, and others are simply unable to find suitable housing. This homelessness crisis is also resulting in daily negative impacts on residents and businesses.

So, what can we do? The City has been proud to work with other local governments and organizations, with funding from the province, to stabilize and support 71 people during the pandemic by providing them shelter, warmth, food, and hope. While these are temporary measures, we will soon have 51 units of permanent supportive housing in North Cowichan, and a further 48 in Duncan by the end of the year. Unfortunately, these initiatives are not enough to meet the growing need for all types of housing, which means there will still be people who will remain unhoused.

These issues are not unique to the City or the region; these go far beyond our borders. The opioid epidemic, housing shortages, and homelessness crises do not belong to me, nor do they exist because of me, City Council, or any of our neighbouring jurisdictions. We stand in a long line of communities facing the same challenges across BC and Canada. It will take investment, policy change, and political will at all levels of government to see a real change in our community. The City will continue to do what we can to manage the situation and work with other local governments to advocate for both immediate and long-term action.

For now, we all do our best to navigate these issues and, accepting this, each of us has a choice to make. We can choose to make this situation better for everyone by connecting and coming together or we can create division and mistrust. I will always choose coming together and I will work with people who choose to do the same. There are so many of you out there daily, making a difference by cleaning up where you can, supporting your neighbours, or volunteering to serve your community. Your efforts make me proud of our City and the people who live and work here.

We are getting through a global pandemic but, despite this and all of the other challenges, when I walk through the City, I see a growing and vibrant downtown with many businesses beginning to bounce back, families laughing, and parks and trails filled with dog walkers and people of all ages. Like every other City in BC, we are dealing with multiple crises, but not one of them gets to define who we are; only we get to do that, so let's build together.

As always, feel free to contact me. ~ Michelle Staples, Mayor
Email: mayor@duncan.ca | Phone: 250-466-9412

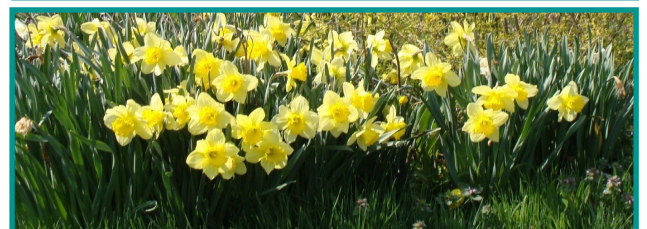
CITY TO PAY FOR POLICING

The City of Duncan now has a population of 5,047 (up from 4,944 in 2016), according to the 2021 Census information released on February 9, 2022. Given the pace of development in recent years, with an approximately 85 residential units added between the May 10, 2016 and May 11, 2021 Census dates, the City has been expecting its population to surpass 5,000 people. The City will now be required to pay 70 percent of policing costs with the federal government paying the remaining 30 percent, as required by the provincial *Policing Act*, if the City utilizes the RCMP.

While the population has remained below 5,000, the City's policing costs were covered by the provincial government; however, in 2009, the City was required to start paying for policing based on provincial population estimates. In 2012, the province determined that the City did not have to pay for policing as they were now using the 2011 Census population information (pop. 4,932). The province refunded \$1,351,519 the City had paid from April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2012. The refund, along with the taxes the City continued to collect as a Police Bridging Capital levy, were placed into a reserve fund, which has been used to pay for capital projects that would otherwise have required borrowing. This reserve fund will be phased out while a Municipal Policing Levy is phased in over 2022 and 2023.

The City will now be required to negotiate with the province to determine how many police officers will be included in a policing agreement. In addition, the City will need to negotiate with the Municipality of North Cowichan for the City's proportional contributions to the operating costs of the RCMP detachment building, including future costs for the new building under construction on Drinkwater Road.

To learn more, please visit the Information Sheet on the City's website: <https://duncan.ca/2022/02/city-to-pay-for-policing/>



Comments, questions, or concerns?

Visit www.duncan.ca | Phone 250-746-6126 | Email duncan@duncan.ca

CITY PROJECTS

- Construction is underway to extend the Canada Avenue paid parking lot for 18 additional parking spaces, a sidewalk and entrance onto Canada Avenue, a rain garden, and two Scarlett Oak trees along with associated landscaping. The work is anticipated to be completed within the next month.
- Conceptual designs are being created and reviewed for future new playground areas at McAdam Park. Public input will be sought prior to proceeding with any procurement.
- New nets for the tennis courts at Centennial Park have arrived and been installed.
- The City and the Cowichan Green Community Society are working to restore and secure the Cob Oven at Centennial Park so that it can be available once again for public use when ready.



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The City has three employment opportunities:

- Public Works Summer Students: Parks
- Streets & Parks Patroller (Casual)
- Engineering Technologist/Technician

To learn more about these positions and how to apply, please visit the City's website:

www.duncan.ca/category/employment-opportunities/

GO PAPERLESS!

Sign up for e-billing to get your next utility bill delivered to your inbox. Email utilities@duncan.ca indicating your account number and address.

2022 BUDGET SESSIONS

The following meetings will discuss the 2022 budget and tax rate(s):

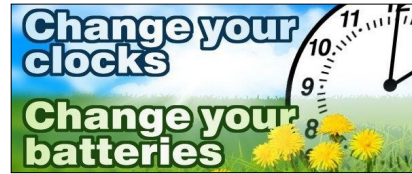
April 4	Noon	Tax rate distribution
April 19	6:00 p.m.	First 3 readings of Financial Plan and Tax Rate Bylaws
May 2	6:00 p.m.	Adoption of Bylaws

The meetings will be live streamed on YouTube.com and will be available for viewing anytime through the duncan.civicweb.net/portal/ or go to YouTube.com and search "City of Duncan". Questions regarding items on the agenda may be sent in advance of the meeting to the Director of Corporate Services at paige@duncan.ca.

If you are unable to view the meeting at home, the meeting can be viewed in Council Chambers at City Hall, 200 Craig Street, Duncan BC at the scheduled meeting time.

SMOKE DETECTORS & DAYLIGHT SAVINGS

A good time to check your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors, as well as change the batteries, is when you change your clocks twice a year. Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday, March 13, 2022.



SELF-GUIDED TOTEM TOUR

Proudly living up to the name "The City of Totems", there are 38 beautifully carved totems, around the City. With rich history behind each totem, it is a "Must See!" Embark on a journey of culture and history by following the yellow footprints and start the self-guided walking tour or take a virtual tour with the interactive map.

Please visit: <https://duncan.ca/visitors/totems-tour>

2022 LOCAL GENERAL ELECTION

The 2022 General Local Election will be held on October 15, 2022. If you have moved, or have never voted before, please visit the Elections BC website to update your voter information or register to vote. Go to the "Voting" drop down menu at: <https://elections.bc.ca/>

THREE PROGRAMS CONTINUE FOR 2022

The City's Enhanced Security Initiative, Graffiti Removal Program, and City-Wide Façade Improvement Program have been extended for another year. These programs were started as pilot programs in 2021 to assist commercial and residential property owners and will continue until the end of 2022. For more information and how to apply to these programs, please visit the City's website: www.duncan.ca

OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN (OCP) & TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY STRATEGY (TMS)

The City's OCP Review and TMS development is ongoing. Please visit the City's PlaceSpeak page (www.placespeak.com/channel/174/) to provide your input to the engagement pages before March 14th and check the City website regularly for updates. Contact the Planning Department for more information.

Email: developmentsservices@duncan.ca

WATER MAIN FLUSHING

City of Duncan water system users please be advised that the City is conducting annual water main flushing from mid-April to the end of May.

This program is intended to clean water distribution pipes of sediment that build up over time. Annually in the spring, water is flushed through the water pipe system and out a fire hydrant.

Any chlorine taste or discolouration of water during this time can be resolved by running a cold-water tap.

To find out about specific flushing dates, please contact Public Works at 250-746-5321.