



Staff Report

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Report To: Council

Date of Meeting: May 25, 2020

Report Number: CAO-015-20

Reviewed By: Andrew C. Allison, CAO

By-law Number:

File Number:

Resolution#:

Report Subject: COVID-19 Business Continuity Planning Update

Recommendation:

1. That Report CAO-015-20 be received for information.

Report Overview

Report CAO-011-20 identified the need to prepare business continuity plans to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff prepared those plans, and through Report CAO-012-20, Council was provided with information regarding the level of staffing required to maintain services that were deemed essential by the Province during the pandemic. This report provides a further update on these issues.

1. Background

- 1.1 In Report [CAO-010-20](#) dated March 13, 2020, Council was advised of the initial changes to Municipal services and programs that staff were undertaking to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.2 In Report [CAO-011-20](#) dated March 23, 2020, staff identified the need to assess and respond to service level adjustments by establishing business continuity plans. Over the next several weeks, those plans were developed.
- 1.3 Through Report [CAO-012-20](#) dated April 14, 2020, Council was advised of the steps taken by staff to allow Municipal services deemed by the Province to be essential (as at April 9, 2020) to continue to be provided during the pandemic. This report provides an update to much of the information contained in Report CAO-012-20.

2. Business Continuity

Emergency Closures

- 2.1 The Provincial government ordered its first emergency closures on March 17. Additional businesses were ordered to be closed on March 23, and a final round of business closures was ordered on April 4. As well, outdoor recreational facilities were ordered closed on March 30. However, more recently some of these restrictions have begun to be lifted and some businesses and facilities have been permitted to reopen.
- 2.2 Municipal services and activities that were primarily impacted by the closures included recreational facilities, libraries, and some municipal construction projects.
- 2.3 Indoor recreational facilities are currently to remain closed. Libraries also remain closed except that as of May 19 they are permitted to provide curbside pick-up and delivery of library materials. Additionally, those municipal infrastructure construction projects that had been halted were permitted to resume on May 4.

- 2.4 Many retail business establishments have experienced a gradual reopening. Hardware stores and safety supply stores were fully reopened on May 9, subject to physical distancing requirements. Garden centres and nurseries were also permitted to reopen on May 9. Beginning on May 11, retail store locations that have a street entrance were permitted to reopen provided they make use of an alternate method of sale such as curb side pick-up or delivery. On May 19, these retail stores were permitted to fully reopen on the condition that customers maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres from each other at all times.
- 2.5 Additional businesses were permitted to reopen on May 19, including: businesses that sell motorhomes, watercraft, or other motorized vehicles; and businesses that provide pet grooming, pet sitting, pet walking, and pet training.
- 2.6 Construction projects have also been gradually permitted to resume. On May 11, all residential construction was authorized to continue. On May 19, all remaining construction was authorized, subject to strict health and safety protocols. Many municipal tenders for regular maintenance and repair were unaffected and continued as much as possible throughout this period.
- 2.7 The Province has also begun to loosen restrictions on certain outdoor recreational facilities. Allotment gardens/community gardens were authorized to reopen on April 24. On May 16, boarding kennels, marinas, seasonal campgrounds, golf courses, and outdoor driving ranges were permitted to reopen. Also, beginning on May 19, some outdoor sports facilities, picnic sites, and off-leash dog parks were permitted to reopen, subject to the requirement that users of the facility maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from any other person. The outdoor sports facilities (e.g. baseball diamonds, soccer fields, tennis courts, skateboard parks) are subject to the additional requirements that team sports are not permitted.
- 2.8 The Provincial government has indicated that we are currently in Stage 1 of a three-stage process to reopen the economy. No firm date has yet been identified for the implementation of stages 2 and 3, but the Provincial government has tentatively suggested a range of 2 to 4 weeks between each stage, dependent on COVID-19 infection rates.
- 2.9 Although many retail businesses have reopened, many other business establishments remain closed. These include restaurants, personal services (e.g. hairdressers), and retail stores that lack direct street access.
- 2.10 Schools have been ordered to remain closed for the remainder of the academic year and organized public events, and social gatherings continue to be limited to no more than 5 persons.

Continuity Plans

- 2.11 In early April, staff prepared business continuity plans for each department. These plans were based on the premise that most municipal services can and should continue, subject only to our ability to maintain safe and healthy workplaces.
- 2.12 In Report CAO-012-20, Council was advised that as part of each Department's continuity plan there was an attempt to determine the level of staffing required to maintain services until the end of April (Phase 1), end of May (Phase 2), and June 30 (Phase 3). As a result of recent Provincial orders to reopen, the only area of the corporation where service levels remain impacted and staffing levels continue to be monitored is Community Services. Other departments have remained at, or are returning to, normal service levels which will require a return to budgeted staffing levels.

Staffing Levels

- 2.13 **Current Levels** – In Report CAO-012-20, Council was advised that staffing levels throughout the corporation are already below normal levels. As of the date of this report, that remains the same. As compared to April 9 (the date on which Report CAO-012-20 numbers were generated), current staffing levels are even lower.

On March 26, 2020, 339 part-time staff were placed on Declared Emergency Leaves (DELs). All these staff remain on DELs. On March 26, 2020, 339 part-time staff were placed on Declared Emergency Leaves (DELs). All these staff remain on DELs. One part-time employee in Community Services has returned to offer lunchtime virtual fitness classes to staff two days each week (her DEL status is not affected).

The following staffing positions identified as vacant in Report CAO-012-20 remain vacant (on hold) at this time: (a) 7 full-time pending the roll-out of the reorganization; (b) 3 full-time equivalents approved in the 2020 budget; (c) 3 full-time retirements; (d) 1 full-time maternity leave; (e) 5 full-time seasonal hires; (f) 6 full-time long-term sick leave vacancies; and (g) 1 full-time voluntary leave of absence. Since April 9, we have had 1 additional full-time retirement (effective May 31), 1 net additional full-time sick leave vacancy and 1 full-time voluntary DEL. These 29 positions represent approximately 10.8% of Clarington's normal full-time labour force (excluding Emergency and Fire Services) which is 269 employees.

Of the 29 full-time positions described above that are currently vacant (on hold), 8 are in the Community Services. Another employee in Community Services will be on maternity leave later this summer. The overall impact is a shortage of 9 full-time positions in Community Services.

The estimated savings (salary and benefits) for vacant (on hold) full-time positions across the entire corporation for the month of May is \$191,150. The estimated savings associated with the part-time staff placed on DELs for the month of May is \$242,704. The total savings in the month of May is therefore \$433,854.

- 2.14 **Summer Students** – Staff applied under the Federal Government’s Canada Summer Jobs Program to receive wage subsidies (at \$14 per hour) for a total of 59 summer students. We have not yet been officially advised of the status of our application, but unofficially we have been told to expect that 27 positions will receive the subsidy which results in an estimated \$105,840 – \$181,440 coming to the Municipality (depending on which positions are approved). The 2020 budget did not include any revenue amount for wage subsidies under this Program because it is not guaranteed.
- 2.15 **Projected Workforce Absenteeism** – From March 14 (the date that we closed our recreation facilities to the public) until April 9, Clarington experienced a total of 115 lost days as a direct result the COVID-19 pandemic. Since April 9, we have only had a total of 8 lost days directly related to the pandemic. This is good news.
- 2.16 **Social Distancing** – In order to protect our staff, we have implemented strict physical distancing measures in the workplace. This continues to result in some inefficiencies that are unavoidable. An example of this was shown in the Workplans for the Roads and Parks Divisions of the Operations Department sent by the Acting Director to Council on May 11. It highlights the challenges of limiting the number of employees travelling in a municipal vehicle.
- 2.17 **Redeployment Opportunities** – In Report CAO-012-20, it was stated that there is ample redeployable work to keep staff meaningfully occupied and engaged. This remains the case as of the date of this report.

A total of 18 affiliated staff have been redeployed from Community Services into the Operations Department (16) and the Clerks Department (2). The Workplans sent by the Acting Director of Operations to Council on May 11 show where the 16 employees redeployed to Operations have been assigned. The 2 employees redeployed into the Clerks Department have assisted with records management.

The details of all staffing issues impacting the Community Services Department (including redeployment) are set out in a confidential memorandum from the Director of Community Services dated May 22, 2020 (Attachment 1 to this Report).

- 2.18 **Labour Implications** – The labour relations issues respecting any reduction in staffing were discussed in a confidential memorandum from Hicks Morley LLP dated April 9, 2020 (Attachment 2 to Report CAO-012-20). The issues identified in this memorandum remain relevant today.

- 2.19 **Other Municipalities** – Clarington’s approach to staffing, and redeployment in particular, remains consistent with most GTA area municipalities and generally aligns with the Provincial and Federal Government’s commitment to keeping businesses and the economy intact as much as possible. One municipality has taken the initiative of establishing a top-up plan to support employees on a DEL.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 Estimates of service provision revenues lost through to the end of May 2020 were provided in section 3.0 of Report CAO-012-20. The disruption to normal operations in Community Services was estimated to result in a loss of approximately \$1 million due to cancelled program registrations, daily admissions, facility rental permits and fitness/swimming memberships. As the closure orders from the Province continue and further cancellations are required, the impact to revenues will increase, however, the net levy impact will be minimized with the corresponding savings in staffing costs. The cashflow analysis prepared by the Director of Finance / Treasurer through Report FND-010-20 showed that the Municipality had sufficient cash resources assuming zero summer program and facility revenue.
- 3.2 Until there is greater certainty on what recreation programming will be permitted by the Province, it is difficult to gauge the impact of summer cancellations at this time. Based on recent indications regarding modified summer camp program delivery, Community Services staff are planning alternative camp programs that could conform to the expected strict health and safety guidelines.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The recommended course of action in this report is based on information available as at May 22, 2020.
- 4.2 It is respectfully recommended that this report be received for information.

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Attachment:

Attachment 1: Confidential Memo from the Director of Community Services dated May 22, 2020 (Distributed Under Separate Cover)