

Attachment 3: EOC Activation (March 13 - June 30, 2020): Lessons Learned

REF #	EVENT (Categorized by EOC Operational Objective)	IMPACT		ACTIONS TAKEN TO SUPPORT SUCCESS (for positive impacts); EARLY WARNING SIGNS (for negative impacts)	RECOMMENDATION / FOLLOW-UP	TIMING				OWNER
		Positive	Negative			Complete / Ongoing	Immediate	Upon Budget Approval	Next Emergency	

1 Healthy Community and Staff

1-1	Staff morale remained high and team worked well together			Leadership prioritized early and ongoing communications and staff safety. HR arranged for weekly wellness webinars. Health and Safety protocols were developed and communicated in a timely fashion.	Continue supportive actions.					CAO
1-2	There were no back-ups to key EOC positions			EOC staff workloads were heavy and would not be sustainable over longer time periods. There is very limited redundancy, which could be an issue if key staff were to fall ill.	Ensure EOC staff take holidays over summer months. Seek Council approval to defer projects delayed by COVID. Train Deputy Directors/Managers to take on EOC roles. Keep EOC staff physically separated from each other to reduce risk of disease transmission.					CAO
1-3	Remote team meetings were facilitated			Microsoft TEAMS and Share Point were made available to support remote collaboration	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
1-4	Key staff were overburdened			Staff logging time for seven days/week for weeks/months.	Train Deputy Directors/Managers to take EOC roles. Seek EMBC authorization to contract support for more routine EOC work, including Communications.					CAO

2 Uninterrupted Essential Services

2-1	Pandemic Plan was updated to respond to COVID-19 early on			A pre-plan had been prepared that could serve as the foundation for a pandemic response plan uniquely suited to COVID-19. Staff began to update that plan even before a Provincial emergency was declared.	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
2-2	Essential services continued to be delivered throughout			Prepared Business Continuity Plan, EOC Operational Plan, Advance Plan and Recovery Plan early on	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
2-3	Most District non-essential operational activities continued throughout			Services were adjusted as necessary so that residents/business could access remotely while offices were closed to public. PPE was secured to allow outside work to continue.	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
2-4	There were challenges with procuring some supplies			Procuring cleaning supplies, PPE and other high-demand items took longer and involved more effort than expected.	Mitigate procurement challenges with open and ongoing communications between local governments. Secure contractor procurement support earlier on. Pre-stock items for potential second wave.					District staff
2-5	Departments were extremely responsive and agile			Communications, IT, PRC and Public Works pivoted often to respond to changing conditions.	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
2-6	High-demand services were enhanced			Long wait lines at waste transfer stations triggered action to set up temporary second drop-off	Respond with enhanced services where possible to meet community needs					District staff
2-7	Budgets were adjusted and investments rebalanced to support response			Statutory deadlines were maintained despite crisis: LGDE, SOFI, year-end, financial plan bylaw, tax rate bylaw, Annual Report	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
2-8	Regular Council meetings were cancelled			Governance decision making was delayed and in-person connections were temporarily lost	Undertake critical incident debrief with Council and staff after pandemic is over					CAO
2-9	Technology was insufficient to allow for effective Council meetings that required both in-person and online participation while livestreaming			Video and audio quality of livestreamed meetings was inferior	Obtain a 3rd party assessment and implement recommendations to allow for blended in-person/electronic meetings that can be livestreamed with enhanced viewing/audio quality of live stream meetings. This will require Council budget approval.					District staff
2-10	FOI inquiries increased dramatically during pandemic (approx. twice that in 2019)			FOI requests are extremely time consuming, compounding pressures on work loads and compromising ability to support emergency response	Obtain additional administrative support to process above-normal volumes of FOIs during any future waves or provide back-fill support.					District staff

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3 Better than Before

3-1	Staff initiated significant systems, process, protocol, policy, service and safety improvements			EOC team identified early on a desire to use the emergency as an opportunity to return services "better than before" and to better position the District for future emergencies, including pandemics. All staff became involved in creating solutions (innovations) to unanticipated challenges.	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
3-2	The entire leadership team now has experience operating an EOC			Prior to the pandemic, the CAO had recruited a Director with previous EOC experience. That Director served as an EOC mentor.	Continue supportive actions. Expand training and mentoring to departmental Deputy Directors and Managers for increased resilience.					District staff
3-3	The EOC had a clear path forward			EOC planning documents were created very early -- in some cases even prior to EOC set-up. Key documents included: Business Continuity Plan, EOC Operational Plan, Advance Plan, Recovery Plan etc.	Continue supportive actions. EOC documents created can serve as foundation for future responses. Specific staff should be assigned to keep plans current.					CAO
3-4	Inefficiencies occurred because multiple agencies had to undertake similar work (COVID signage, Safety Plans etc.)			Multiple jurisdictions (CRD, municipalities, FNs etc.) were independently undertaking work that could have benefitted from coordination	Identify work that would benefit from being coordinated with external players. Participate in regional after-action analyses /discussions to relay opportunities for enhanced coordination.					District staff
3-5	Pre-existing EOC training and support materials were inadequate to support a pandemic response			Systems and infrastructure was not initially in place to operate virtually	Update EOC training materials to support pandemic responses (including operation of a virtual EOC)					EMBC
3-6	Municipal Hall refurbishment plans proceeded			Refurbishment recognized as being critical to supporting pandemic response (existing carpets are so old they can no longer be cleaned)	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
3-7	Documentation systems captured key EOC documents			Centralized e-filing system was set up early on. Email addresses were set up for each EOC Section.	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
3-8	Senior staff with no previous EOC experience, became more familiar with EOC operations			Staff were eager to learn. One staff member who had previous experience was able to bring others up to speed.	This EOC activation was very different from most municipal activations as the District was in a support role to the Province. Key differences should be conveyed to staff as part of debriefing sessions. An EOC exercise testing ability to respond to a local-led response should be held in 2021 and ideally annually thereafter. Application should be made for grant funding of such.					CAO
3-9	IT systems were significantly enhanced			Staff accelerated the transition to Office 365 (including Microsoft Teams) and new PC and networking hardware. Staff also accelerated transitioned to electronic Accounts Payable and increased use of purchasing cards and introduced eSignature approvals. Zoom conference calls were set up for Council meetings. Remote check-in and check-out systems were established.	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
3-10	Emergency planning documents were developed			Key documents included: Business Continuity Plan, Service Level Overview, EOC Operational Plan, Advance Plan, Recovery Plan etc. These documents were designed to simultaneously advance other corporate priorities (e.g. development of work plans).	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
3-11	Department work plans have been delayed			While many operational activities have continued, progress on special projects, Council Resolution Items, and Corporate Plan projects has been delayed.	Seek Council approval to defer projects delayed by COVID.					CAO

4 Requests for Support Met

4-1	Evolving community needs were met			Staff and Council were flexible and agile to respond to emerging business and community needs (e.g. approaching all businesses one-on-one; supporting Oak Bay High graduation events etc.)	Continue supportive actions.					Council and District staff
4-2	Staff unclear on support available from various volunteer organizations			Extent of support that could be offered to residents was unclear.	Identify and communicate with key stakeholders/potential support networks at the onset of an EOC activation.					District staff
4-3	EOC decisions and actions were effectively tracked			An Action Planning tracking system was set up early on and continually updated	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
4-4	District responded quickly to Provincial requests for information on facilities available for potential Provincial use			District prepared in advance for the possibility that the Province would be requesting information on available resources	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
4-5	Legislated tools were acted upon in a timely fashion			Staff monitored situational changes and prioritized Council and community needs. Examples included: patio and sidewalk expansions, four readings of bylaws, allowing people back into Municipal Hall.	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
4-6	Provincial guidelines and directives were acted upon in a timely fashion			Staff monitored situational changes and prioritized responses (Willows Beach parking and Esplanade Avenue closures, deployment of Ambassador teams etc.)	Continue supportive actions.					District staff

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5 Strengthened Relationships

5-1	A common operating approach was in place across all departments			EOC planning documents were created (Business Continuity Plan, EOC Operational Plan, Advance Plan, Recovery Plan etc.)	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
5-2	Leadership team relationships were strengthened			Frequent EOC meetings were held to coordinate activities (initially twice/day, then daily, then three times/week, twice/week, then once per week and finally every two weeks)	Continue supportive actions.					District staff
5-3	There was good coordination and cooperation with surrounding jurisdictions			Regular Provincial updates and multi-jurisdictional weekly conference calls were helpful. Province's regular Mayor-Minister and Premier calls and CAO and Minister calls were also helpful. There was considerable collaboration with other jurisdictions.	Continue to connect with local governments and Provincial Government to raise concerns and address communication needs. Continue to collaborate with GVLR and other municipalities.					Province
5-4	Communications from Province were not always clear and/or timely			Processes required to clarify updates and evolving instructions, guidelines and policy were often prolonged and impeded actions on the ground.	Advocate for greater clarity and consistency in communications from the Province. Request that Province provide advance notice of significant changes in direction/orders.					Province
5-5	Expenditure Authorization Forms (EAFs) were sometimes rejected			Information on reimbursable expenses was at times vague and guidance shifted as the emergency evolved.	Engage in more dialogue with PREOC early on to be clear on requirements					District staff
5-6	Council was supportive of the EOC's delegated powers			Regular CAO email updates to Council; CAO was continuously available to answer questions	Continue supportive actions. Gather Council for earlier group updates when EOC operations go on for more than a month.					Council/CAO
5-7	Information flowed through the EOC			Council brought items needing attention to the EOC	Continue supportive actions.					Council/CAO
5-8	Some departments became overburdened by operational demands			Staff in multiple departments became frustrated with extraordinary work volumes and changes in pace necessitated by the pandemic	Gather team to discuss how workloads can be addressed so as not to overwhelm staff. Clarify what is operational and what must come through the EOC for coordination. Gather together entire departmental leadership teams when gearing up to restart operations.					District staff
5-9	Community obtained timely and relevant updates			Mayor prepared regular video updates; staff collated information for public and made available on website and disseminated through public notices and social media; Council undertook business phone survey. Communications with the community were prioritized.	Continue supportive actions.					Council
5-10	Community input continued to be obtained			Councillors brought constituent feedback/concerns to EOC's attention	Continue supportive actions.					Council
5-11	Staff not based at Municipal Hall were sometimes left out of communication loop			Some work was duplicated or inconsistent or not in line with most current practise/protocols.	Place greater emphasis on timely sharing of decisions and directions with all those affected. Prioritize ensuring all staff have access to Microsoft Teams (teleconferencing).					District staff
5-12	Reliable messaging provided on District's COVID-19 webpage was not amplified to extent possible			Quality of messaging was exemplary but not all staff and Council accessed/used the District's COVID-19 webpage and social media posts to promote/amplify messaging.	Encourage all to stay familiar with the webpage posts, retweet posts, refer others to District information sources. Consider other means to promote messaging.					District staff & Council
5-13	Accomplishments during the course of the pandemic were not sufficiently acknowledged and celebrated			Island Health video & publication, communications experts using the District as an example of high quality messaging, Mayor's videos, other communities mirroring District approaches etc.	Find ways to celebrate successes under difficult circumstances/competing pressures and extreme workloads					District staff & Council