Request for Decision

To: Peter de Verteuil, CAO
Date: July 6, 2015
From: Talitha Soldera, Director of Finance
Re: City Hall Hours and Christmas Hours

RECOMMENDATION:

That the following recommendation be forwarded to Council for approval:

That Council authorize changing the hours of City Hall to 8:30 – 4:00 Monday to Friday year round starting September 1, 2015.

And That Council amend the City Hall Closure – Christmas Season Policy to allow City Hall and Public Works staff to go home with pay at 2:00 pm on Christmas Eve so that staff may spend time with their families; closing City Hall and Public Works to accommodate this.

BACKGROUND:

Currently, City Hall is open to the public from 8:00 – 4:00 from June to September and from 8:30 – 4:30 for the remainder of the year. Staff shifts are the same as the hours City Hall is open.

At City Hall there are only three staff at the front along with the office manager and the utility billing clerk on a part time basis. Lunches are staggered so that there are always two people to assist with answering the telephone and helping people who come to the counter.

One of the focuses over the past year has been on improving internal communication, increasing staff morale and improving productivity. However, in order to meet with all staff, we must gather in the front area and someone must excuse themselves from the meeting if the phone rings or a customer comes in.

ANALYSIS:

City Hall Hours
In 2014, staff tracked the number of telephone calls and customers at the counter in the spring and in the fall. On average, 2.4 telephone calls were received before 9:00 am and the most telephone calls received before 9:00 am on any day was 5. For counter traffic, an average of 1.5 to 2.2 people per day came in and the greatest number of customers to come in before 9:00 am on any day was 4.

Changing the hours so that City Hall is open from 8:30 – 4:00 each day would allow staff shifts to remain the same but would provide a half hour at the beginning of each day in the summer and at the end of each day in the winter when staff meetings could be held. It also provides time for staff to prepare the front counter for the first customer of the day.
Hours for other local governments in the area are:
- CVRD 8:00 – 4:30
- Nanaimo 8:30 – 4:30
- Qualicum 8:30 – 4:30
- Ladysmith 9:00 – 4:00
- Parksville 8:00 – 4:00
- North Cowichan – varied hours depending on time of year between 8:00 and 4:30

Twice per year City Hall is temporarily closed so that all City Staff can participate in a celebration. These two occurrences are the staff appreciation lunch at the end of summer and the Christmas lunch in December. In both of these instances, a sign is placed on the doors of City Hall advising people that City Hall will be closed for one hour and staff go to public works to participate in the celebrations.

**Christmas Hours**

On Christmas Eve, staff at both City Hall and Public Works are typically allowed to go home with pay at 2:00 pm to spend time with their families. Historically, management staff have remained at City Hall to answer the phone and assist any customers who may come in. Each year, no customers come in to City Hall and only a couple of telephone calls are received. Public Works is not open to the public so does not necessarily require anyone to be present for the last two hours of this day as the after hours phone number is always in service.

Amending the policy to officially close City Hall and Public Works at 2:00 pm on Christmas Eve would provide public notice of the amended hours and provide certainty to both union and management staff.

In the event that an emergency call-out is required, the union employees understand that overtime is not paid between the hours of 2:00 pm and the regular end of the day.

**IMPLICATIONS:**

- **Financial:** n/a
- **Policy:** City Hall Closure – Christmas Season Policy
- **Strategic Priorities:** Improve internal and external communications.
- **Sustainability:** n/a

**ALTERNATE RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. That Council authorize changing the hours at City Hall to 9:00 – 4:30 Monday to Friday year round
2. That City Hall hours remain unchanged.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

City Hall Closure – Christmas Season Policy

Respectfully submitted,

Talitha Soldera, Director of Finance

Reviewed by CAO