



CITY OF FORT DODGE

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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAY 7, 2020

The City of Fort Dodge City Council will be voting on a potential COVID-19 recovery stimulus package at the May 11, 2020 regularly scheduled City Council meeting. Staff has been working with elected official and community economic leaders to identify a first round economic stimulus package to aid in the recovery of Fort Dodge. City Manager David Fierke says, "I want to thank City and Growth Alliance staff with their assistance in creating this package for Council consideration. We worked to create a package that has a quick impact and broad applicability." It is important to balance critical support with sound fiscal policy. City Clerk Jeff Nemmers explains, "The economic downturn from the COVID-19 restrictions will have an impact on City finances. This package will provide assistance within the control of sound fiscal policy, and allows the City to maintain adequate fund balances. We are being good stewards of the public finances."

Downtown Parking

At the request of Main Street Fort Dodge, the Council will consider extending and expanding the temporary parking rules currently in place. From Director Kris Patrick: "Main Street business across America has been hit as hard as any during the pandemic and Fort Dodge is no exception. In an effort to help small business owners, customers and employees minimize their expenses and maximize their experience doing business downtown in the future, Main Street Fort Dodge recommends suspending permit parking in the city-owned lots and converting them to 12-hour free parking. Main Street also recommends changing all on-street parking to 2-hour free parking. The recommended duration for these economic stimulus initiatives is at least one full year to allow for businesses to cycle through their natural seasonal progression of business and allow time for economic recovery to occur with it."

Main Street Fort Dodge has suggested the following temporary rules effective June 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021 for the downtown area:

- All on-street parking would be two-hour maximum parking. Individuals who choose to extend their visit downtown beyond two hours would have the option to feed the meters for a longer stay.
- All city owned lots, both permit and metered parking, would be free to patrons, residents and businesses, so long as the vehicles were not parked in the same spot in excess of 12 hours.

Building Permits

Individuals and businesses looking to complete a new build or renovation in the coming months could be eligible for a 50% building permit fees forgiveness if a permit is pulled by July 31, 2020. Apparent structural construction would be

required to begin within 60 days of the permit and a normal course of construction would need to continue to be eligible for the fee forgiveness.

One-Time Water Bill Reduction

City of Fort Dodge water users could potentially see a one-time \$25.00 reduction in their June bills. Fort Dodge Mayor Matt Bemrich explains, “The City has reserve balances in our budgets for a rainy day or a major disaster such as COVID-19. Due to the current pandemic, Fort Dodge residents and businesses need some help. This one-time reduction gives the City an opportunity to help people during this tough time while still maintaining an adequate reserve to continue to operate our utilities. We encourage those who receive the reduction and are able to pay it forward do so by supporting any of our local businesses, either by ordering food to-go, responsibility visiting stores or by purchasing a gift card to use at such time the business can safely open.”

Credit Card Transaction Fees

The City Council will vote to continue to encourage citizens to utilize online payment by waiving credit card transaction fees until further notice. This benefit applies to all online credit card payments with the exception of payments to Fort Dodge Parks and Recreation.

Utility Bill Delinquency Fee

The two percent fee charged to delinquent utility bills could be waived if the fee was assessed between March 15, 2020 and June 1, 2020 or later based upon ongoing COVID conditions in the state.

As City leaders continue to evaluate the state of the local economy moving forward, additional opportunities will be explored and potentially implemented. The following possibilities are currently being investigated:

Adjust Rules Surrounding Residential and Commercial Tax Abatement on Rehabbed and/or New Construction

A temporary adjustment to rules surrounding residential and commercial tax abatement on new construction could be considered at a later date. The adjustment would make the tax abatement available to new construction or rehabilitations of commercial properties outside the downtown area for 2020. Current rules are listed below. The proposed change is indicated in red.

1. Single Family Residential
 - a. Improved or New Construction – 100% on 1st \$75,000 in value for 5 years (City-wide)
2. Slum/Blighted Residential Area
 - a. New – 100% for 7 years
 - b. Improvements – 100% for 3 years or 10 year sliding scale
3. Multi-Residential (3 or more units)
 - a. New – 90% for 10 years
 - b. Improvements – 100% for 3 years or 10 year sliding scale
4. Commercial (~~Downtown-only~~)
 - a. Rehab or New Construction – 100% for 3 years or 10 year sliding scale
5. Industrial (designated areas)
 - a. Rehab or New construction – 100% for 3 years or 10 year sliding scale
6. Abandoned – Residential, Multi-Family, Commercial or Industrial
 - a. Rehab – 100% for 5 years or 15 year sliding scale

TIF Incentives Extended by Six Months (Case by Case Basis)

Projects not yet approved could have TIF incentives extended an additional six months if work on the project started before July 1, 2020. This incentive would be approved on a case by case basis as projects are submitted.

Paperless Billing and ACH Payments

A permanent \$1.00 per month discount on a customer's monthly bill could be applied if the customer elects to receive their bill via email and submit payments automatically using the ACH method. This discount would be available to those currently enrolled in both options.

Webster County COVID-19 Business Impact Survey

A second round of the economic stimulus package to aid in recovery may be considered. Our economic landscape has clearly been reshaped. We must rapidly pivot and readjust our focus in order to navigate this uncertainty together. Now more than ever, it is vital for us to improve and strengthen our businesses. However, in order to do this, we must have a clear understanding of what our businesses need to weather this storm and remain economically viable into the future.

A local COVID-19 task force has been established. Representatives from the City, Greater Fort Dodge Growth Alliance, Main Street, C-SSMID and Small Business Development Center have joined forces to identify and enact initiatives to best support our businesses. The groups first objective, is to determine what resources would be most valuable to our businesses at this time. To accomplish this objective, a Webster County COVID-19 Business Impact Survey will be dispersed on Monday, May 11th. We highly encourage all businesses to complete this short survey. It is vital we hear your voice to ensure the success of another stimulus package.

If you do not receive the survey or have questions, please contact Dawn Larson, Economic Development Specialist at (515)576-4551 or dlarson@fortdodgeiowa.org