

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

DATE: 2018 March 07

FROM: DIRECTOR FINANCE

FILE: 7800-01

SUBJECT: **PROPERTY TAX COLLECTION SATELLITE OFFICE AND MAILBOX INITIATIVE**

PURPOSE: To provide the Financial Management Committee with information regarding a planned pilot exercise for the provision of alternative locations for the payment of property taxes.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** the Financial Management Committee recommend Council receive this report as information.

REPORT**1.0 BACKGROUND**

A larger number of customers usually come to City Hall between mid-June and mid-July. This increase is driven by property tax notices billed out in May for which the due date is the 2nd business day in July. In order to mitigate congestion at City Hall during this time and service taxpayers in the community better, the Finance Department has looked into providing citizens with alternative payment locations. After reviewing what other municipalities have done in the provision of alternative property tax payment sites, a 2018 pilot program comprising of three new initiatives has been developed. The program is comprised of:

1. Remote Property Tax Collection Office – Bonsor South Metro Club
2. City Hall Car Park Drop Box
3. Recreation Centre Drop Boxes

2.0 REMOTE PROPERTY TAX COLLECTION OFFICE - BONSOR SOUTH METRO CLUB

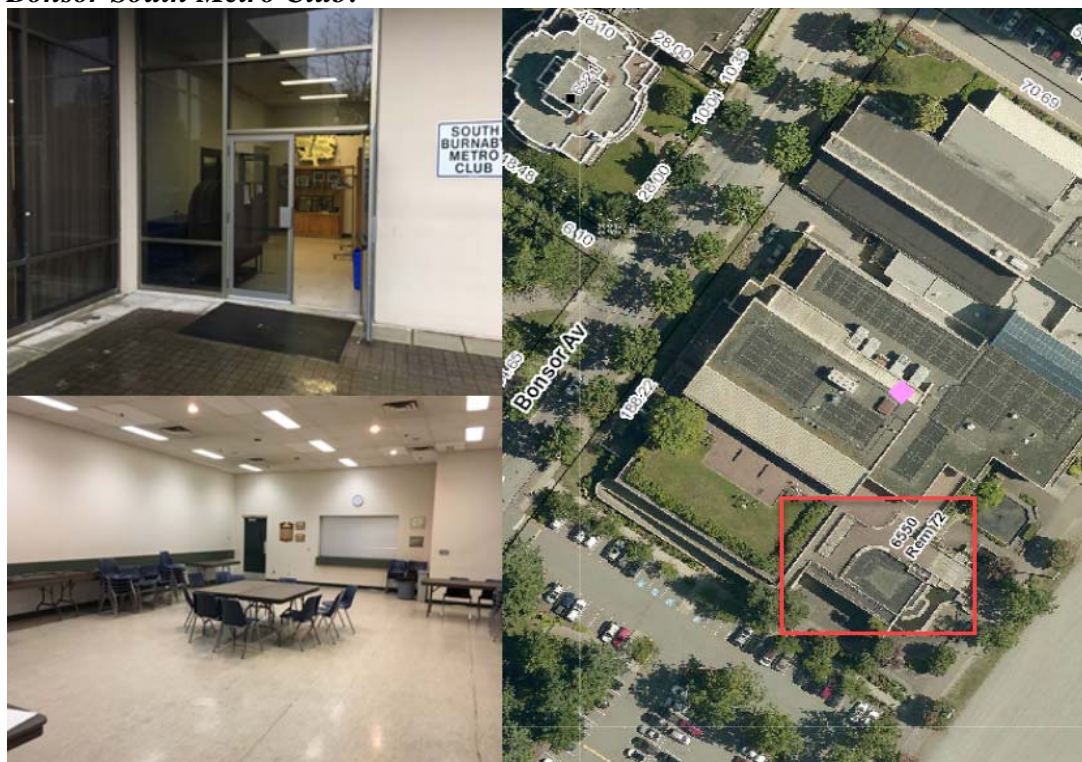
Situated on the 1st floor, with a private external entrance, this location offers a self-contained area for the collection of tax payments in close proximity to the Bonsor Recreation Centre. The site is used after 5:00 PM on a daily basis for community events; therefore the hours of operation for property tax payment collection will be from 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM on weekdays. The site will operate from June 04 to July 04.

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A number of remedial measures are required to bring the site up to an acceptable standard for security purposes. This includes a dedicated security presence during each weekday, the implementation of security cameras and special pickup arrangements for payments. Given the lack of permanent workspace, cash payments will not be taken at this location. Only cheque and debit payments will be accepted.

Work has been undertaken by the Information Technology Department to enable the use of the tax system and printing at this location. The next step is to install a series of new data points at the site and commence on site testing. Other work includes remedial painting and carpentry work, signage, advertising, staff scheduling, additional merchant devices and daily procedural changes for the Finance Department and Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department staff. Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services staff has been advised to redirect all queries on property taxation to Finance Department staff that will be located at the Bonsor South Metro Club.

Bonsor South Metro Club:



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3.0 CITY HALL CAR PARK DROP BOX

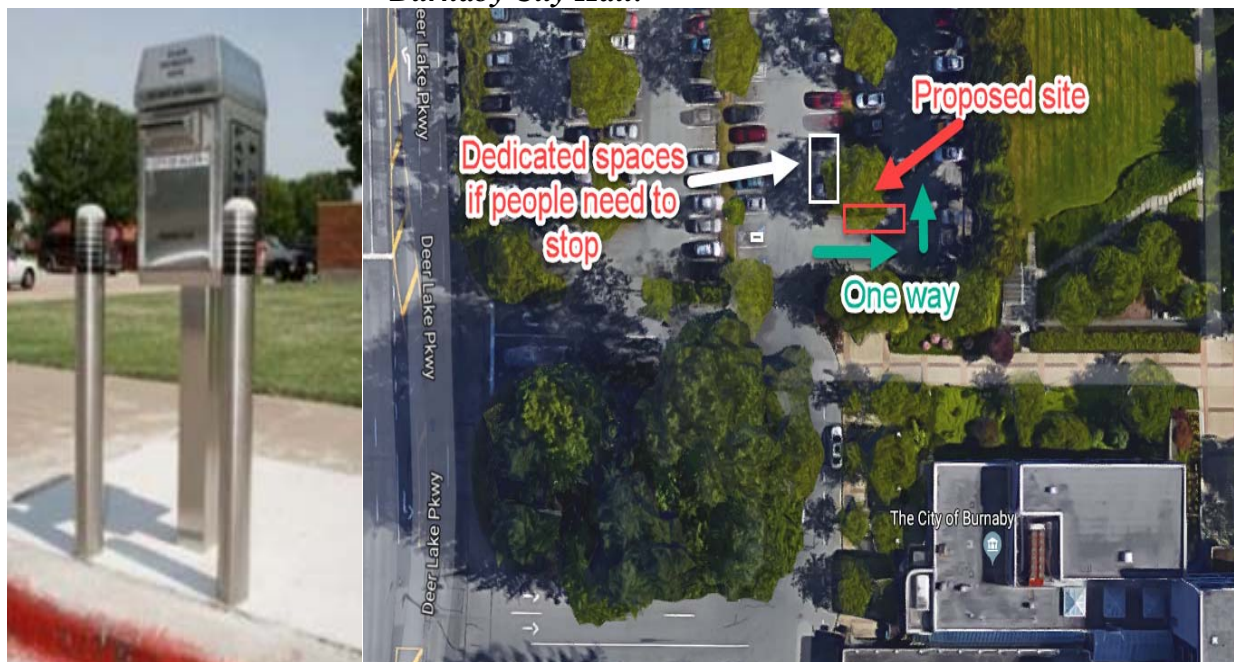
A drop box will be installed in the City Hall car park allowing taxpayers to quickly drop off payments (cheque and stub) without the need to enter City Hall. This should alleviate issues around parking during the tax season. Utility payments tend to be by mail or online, therefore there is less demand for parking or cashier services however; if the pilot is successful, utility payments will also be permitted through the drop box in Q1 2019.

Customers will be able to drop off payments in the City Hall car park 24/7 during tax season, from mid-May through to July 04. After this time the drop box will be locked to prevent further payments.

Slight alterations to the traffic flow into the parking lot are required. Security arrangements for day time security, daily emptying of the unit and security cameras are required to mitigate risk. The reassignment of parking spaces adjacent to the unit is under consideration, but should not pose a delay or additional costs for the project. Improved signage will be provided to guide customers.

On-site security will be used to stand watch each day when Finance staff empty the mailbox. In order to mitigate theft or damage, additional barriers will be installed with the dropbox unit.

Burnaby City Hall:



Proposed Unit

Proposed Location

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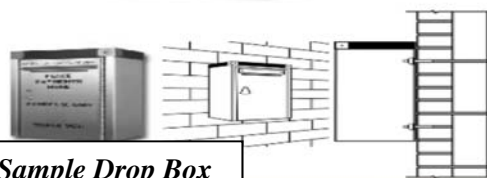
4.0 RECREATION CENTRE DROP BOXES

Situated in Eileen Daily, Cameron and Edmonds Recreation Centres, these drop boxes will allow customers to drop off tax payments (cheque and stub) without the need to come to City Hall. Customers will be able to drop off payments during normal operating hours for the respective recreation centres during the tax season, from mid-May through to 5:00 PM July 04.

For security purposes each unit will be located in an area that is not visible to the exterior doors. While each location has cameras, improvements are required in order to provide sufficient views of each drop box location and to satisfy security requirements. In addition, increased security camera data storage capacity is being implemented at these sites and City Hall to allow staff to review the usage of the boxes in addressing customer payment queries. Improved camera security also mitigates the risks associated with theft and/or vandalism of the drop boxes.

Finance Department staff will not be present at each location; therefore all customer enquiries will be redirected to City Hall. Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services staff cannot assist in the completion of tax applications or in the receipting of payments, and will not have access to print off a customer's tax statement. The City will leverage its current collection vendor and schedules for emptying and transporting payments from these units. Additional signage will be placed at each location to promote drop box usage.

Location of Proposed Drop Boxes at Respective Centres:



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5.0 SUMMARY

The total cost of all three initiatives will be approximately \$47,000, plus the cost of Finance staff at the Bonsor site. Staffing has already been accommodated through stabilization funding in the 2018 budget. The remaining costs can be accommodated within the Finance Department 2018 Operating Budget. Finance Department staff are working with the Corporate Communications staff on advertising these new initiatives to Burnaby citizens through the City's website, local newspapers, and property tax notices.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Financial Management Committee recommend Council receive this report as information.



Noreen Kassam, CPA, CGA
DIRECTOR FINANCE

NK:RR /mlm

Copied to: City Manager
Director Corporate Services
Director Public Safety & Community Services
Director Engineering
Director Parks Recreation & Cultural Services
Chief Information Officer
Director Human Resources