

## Updated Mayors Year in Review 2020

The great challenges we faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, were matched by significant efforts and strides by council and staff around a range of projects, programs, and initiatives. I am pleased to highlight some of these here, through the lens of the town's strategic priorities.

With the arrival of COVID-19, urgent responses were needed to support the town's business community, and drive economic development measures to assist in the recovery and resilience of the economy. This included the implementation and extension of a Temporary Patio and Parklet Program, to enable Comox food and beverage businesses to expand the footprint of their businesses outdoors, to counter the reduced seating capacity requirements inside their businesses.

Further, the town participated in the Economic Recovery Task Force, which resulted in a number of COVID-19 response initiatives including the submission of two critical Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program grants for the construction of additional parking areas at the Comox Valley Airport, and the construction of a Marina Service Building at the Comox Marina, part of the next phase of improvements in the park and harbour.

To support the health and well-being of our residents during this difficult time, the town drove to safely reopen the Comox Community Centre after it had to close in March, through a methodical, phased approach, led by provincial safety guidelines. The centre also launched the ActiveNet registration software program to provide an improved user experience for those that register for a range of programs online.

On the community development and planning front, I am pleased to see the movement towards a number of housing developments that will provide more than 300 new housing units for residents including rentals, single-family to multi-family options, and affordable seniors housing. One example includes the seniors' housing project that was approved on 1582 Balmoral Ave. that would see a 55-unit apartment building constructed to help meet critical shortages in affordable seniors housing, should a federal grant be approved. Another example is a collaboration between the developer and the Comox Valley Children's Day Care Society for the project at 695 Aspen Rd. that will not only help deliver a number of multi-family rental units, but will also feature a new non-profit daycare centre for 28 children. We also developed and posted open house information boards, comments forms and hosted virtual meetings to seek feedback on council's preferred option for the North East Comox Stormwater Management Plan.

Relative to our climate change and environmental priorities, the town installed new electric vehicle charging stations at the fire hall and at the town hall, and partnered with the Comox Centre Mall to install two charging stations on-site. In collaboration with other Island municipalities, the town secured funding for another EV station to be installed in 2021.

Council also updated the building bylaw to include the BC Energy Step Code, which requires energy efficiency in new construction in the town, ahead of the province's schedule. As the holiday season approached, the town transitioned from cutting down healthy trees each year for the Town Square on Comox Avenue, to building a reusable Christmas tree with LED lights. The new tree, coupled with the replacement of the white street tree lights along Comox Avenue from incandescent bulbs to LEDs this season, were other steps the town has taken to support energy conservation and be more sustainable in its activities.

Finally, council recently approved a new Bylaw Adjudication Program which will be rolled out in early 2021 as a way to create a simple, fair and cost-effective system for dealing with minor bylaw contraventions.

I want to recognize the great work of town staff, now under the leadership of our new chief administrative officer, Jordan Wall, for their resilience and adaptive approach throughout this unprecedented time, and also extend my thanks and appreciation to council for their efforts.

There are many more initiatives and projects coming in 2021. I encourage all residents to continue to engage with the town by viewing council proceedings via our new YouTube channel, submitting questions to council, participating in the COVID-19 adapted open houses and public hearings we continue to hold, and following the various activities and initiatives of the town on our website, Facebook and Twitter channels, as a way to stay connected.

Mayor Russ Arnott