

COPING WITH COVID-19: FINDING  
INNOVATIVE WAYS TO REACH OUT

# Oh How We Miss You...

Summer is traditionally our time to connect in person at events like the Shoreline STEM Fair, the LFP Elementary Science Fair, the North City Jazz Walk, Shoreline Days, and other community gatherings. When COVID-19 curtailed these efforts, we found some new ways to provide outreach and education:

## Keep Learning...

• **Dinosaur Water: Exploring the Water Cycle**

Parents, if you're looking for ways to engage your younger learners, look no further. NCWD staff has taken our Water Cycle in a Cup activity and turned it into a 30 minute, in-home, science education activity packet target to early elementary students!

• **Online Distance Learning Links**

Our website now includes links to a variety of free distance learning opportunities for at-home students, from online science demonstrations to nature explorations.

Find all these resources and more on our website: click the button titled **"Customer Support and Resources During COVID."**

## Keep Conserving...

• **Free Conservation Items**

Our free conservation items are still available... just swing by the drive thru during regular business hours to request a low-flow shower head, faucet aerator, hose washers, or a toilet leak detection kit while supplies last.

• **Free Online Savvy Gardener Class on Thursday, October 8**

Join an online class focused on Water Smart Gardening to learn the basics of rain gardens, rain collection, drainage solutions, and water-smart plants. Class is free but you must register to attend: send an email to [theresah@northcitywater.org](mailto:theresah@northcitywater.org) or call our main office at 206.362.8100.

## Keep in Touch...

Feel free to contact us with any questions about the above resources at 206.361.8100. We'd love to hear from you, and look forward to the day we can all connect in person again. Until then, stay well!

COPING WITH COVID-19:  
ACKNOWLEDGING STAFF DEDICATION

# Staff Anniversaries

Employees like Bob and Mike are key to smooth operations—especially during a pandemic. Join us in congratulating them both for 30 years with North City Water District!



**Bob Heivilin**

Bob's first job with the District was reading water meters... back in the day when it took two people, rather than today's time-saving electronic meters. He was soon cross-trained in most of

the operational jobs around the District, he even built our first website—which is what he loves best about working for a smaller utility: the ability to understand and work on all aspects of water through a variety of different tasks. These days Bob tends to focus on water quality monitoring, as well as cross-connection control. He's especially proud of having designed, built, and installed water filling stations for emergency preparedness. On the weekends, he loves spending time with his family, and volunteering with his church youth group. Says Bob, "A career at a water utility allows you plenty of room to grow. You can specialize in one area, or become knowledgeable in many areas. These days it feels good to be an essential service to my community."



**Mike Oberstadt**

Mike is currently the Operations Lead, having done everything from meter reading and installation, to maintenance on core system facilities, and even customer service. Every

week is something new: he might be obtaining permits, coordinating scheduling, and training personnel, or providing customer service, water line locations, and other field work. He especially loves being able to teach employees and customers about the water system, using experience and visual aids rather than just words. When he's not on the job, Mike enjoys doing hands-on repair projects around the house, some woodworking, and HAM radio. He especially loves being in the mountains or on the water sailing. His advice to people considering a water career? "It doesn't matter if you're looking for a job or a career. A water utility can be both of those things. Just be sure to bring a change of clothes, because you will get wet now and then."



# NORTH CITY WAVES

A newsletter for water-related issues and info

Serving the communities of Shoreline and Lake Forest Park since 1931

Issue 3: July • August • September 2020

## From Our Board...

by Ron Ricker, President

Our board would like to send our appreciation to the many men and women who are responsible for our critical infrastructure during this pandemic. Doctors and nurses, postal workers, delivery drivers, and our local grocery store workers are just a few of those who have helped keep our community strong. North City Water District is committed to ensuring all of our customers and local businesses have good clean water, despite the impact of COVID-19 on all of us. The theme of this newsletter, "Coping with COVID-19," details specific measures we've been implementing over the past few months. These include operational changes to comply with social distancing, enhanced safe work practices, and personal protective gear; as well as payment programs for those experiencing financial difficulties. We've also compiled a number of online learning opportunities to support distance learning for kids as well as adults—from a terrarium project to introduce young children to the earth's water system, and multiple distance learning links on our website's COVID-19 Resources Page, to free online Savvy Gardener classes for adults. During our mid-year financial report, we took a careful look at our own financial impacts, both as a result of the pandemic, as well as decreased water usage during this cooler year. Our staff and Board identified additional cost cutting measures that will be discussed in the coming months to enable us to continue to provide consistently high quality water service despite decreased revenue. Give us a call at 206.362.8100 if you have questions about any of these items.

North City Waves Newsletter ~ a publication by North City Water District

website at [www.northcitywater.org](http://www.northcitywater.org)

(3) Sign up for news, alerts, free classes and more on our

(2) Follow us on [www.facebook.com/NorthCityWaterDistrict](https://www.facebook.com/NorthCityWaterDistrict)

(1) Join [www.nextdoor.com](http://www.nextdoor.com) for neighborhood news and notices

## Three Ways to Stay in Touch

- Financial Assistance Programs
- Project Update: New Maintenance Facility
- Mid-Year Budget Analysis
- Community Outreach and Education
- Staff Anniversaries

## Inside This Issue

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The North City Waves Newsletter is brought to you by North City Water District, and its Board of Commissioners:

Ron Ricker (President), Patty Hale (Vice President), and Charlotte Haines (Secretary).

Feel free to contact us at PO Box 55367, or 1519 NE 177th Street, Shoreline, WA 98155.

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COPING WITH COVID-19: HELPING OUR CUSTOMERS

# Financial Assistance Programs for Our Customers

The impacts of this pandemic are lasting far longer than any of us expected, causing some families to experience financial difficulties, including paying their water bills.

Gov. Inslee’s proclamation about utilities prevents late fees and service disconnections, but *“does not relieve utility customers from their obligation to pay utility bills.”*

If you’ve been struggling to pay your water bill, we will not charge any late fees through October 15, 2020, and will not disconnect water service for those who are behind.

Best of all, we have **THREE** financial programs available, and are standing by to help you get enrolled.

## Financial Assistance Program 1—NEW! COVID-19-Impacted Low Income Rate Reduction

If your income has been impacted by COVID-19, this new program reduces your residential base rate by 50%.

*What you need to do:*

- Visit our website at [www.northcitywater.org/forms](http://www.northcitywater.org/forms) and download the form: **“COVID-19-Impacted Low Income Rate Reduction Application.”** You can also pick one up at our drive-through window, or give us a call and we’ll mail one out to you.
- Complete the application.
- Make copies of documents that demonstrate how your family has been impacted by COVID.
- Mail the completed application and documents into our office (or bring them to our drive-through window).

## Financial Assistance Program 2—NEW! COVID-19-Impacted Deferred Payment Plan

If your income has been impacted by COVID-19, this program allows customers to pay their past due balance over a period of time, as long as they continue to keep up to date with their current water bill payments. This program can be used on its own, or in conjunction with Program 1.

*What you need to do:*

- If you are eligible for this program, the District will contact you directly during August or September to get it set up. You do not need to contact us.



## Financial Assistance Program 3—EXPANDED! Low Income Reduced Water Rate Reduction

North City Water District has offered a Low Income Rate Reduction program for years, however this year our Board updated the program to remove the cap on the interest and dividend income, AND increase the rate reduction from 24% to 50% of the base residential rate.

Low income residents who meet the HUD guidelines of very low income households—*based on your household income for 2019*—can be eligible for this rate reduction program through May 2021.

**Note:** because this is based on last year’s income, versus COVID-19-impacted income in 2020, this program is best for those with longer-term financial challenges.

*What you need to do:*

- Visit our website at [www.northcitywater.org/forms](http://www.northcitywater.org/forms) and download the form: **“Low Income Rate Reduction Application.”** You can also pick one up at our drive-through window, or give us a call and we’ll mail one out to you.
- Complete the application.
- Send us a copy of your 2019 income tax return and all applicable documentation (detailed on the application form).
- Mail the completed application and documents into our office (or bring them to our drive-through window).

COPING WITH COVID-19: MANAGING CONSTRUCTION DELAYS

# Project Update: New Maintenance Facility

Exterior and interior construction is nearly complete... interior finishes are installed... the emergency back-up generator has been placed... landscape is growing beautifully... now all we need is electricity!

As an essential service provider, COVID-19 did not initially impact the water district’s capital program. It did, however, impact our contractor with several material delivery delays. Thankfully, there is only one major item left: getting the electricity installed to the site. Once that is done, the contractor can complete the final connection to the different systems, including HVAC, lighting controls, fire system alarm, hot water circulating system, and gates. We expect electricity to be installed later this summer, and the contractor estimates an additional month to complete their work. In late October or early November, our crews will finally be able to occupy their long-awaited new Maintenance Facility!

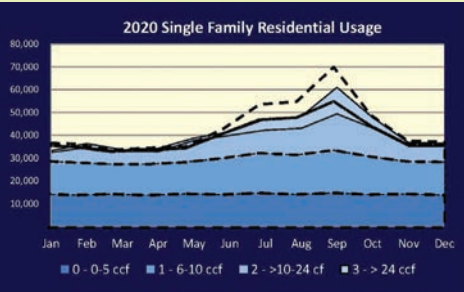


Photos by Steven H. Robinson, [www.ShorelineAreaNews.com](http://www.ShorelineAreaNews.com)

COPING WITH COVID-19: FORECASTING THE BUDGET

# Mid-Year Budget Analysis

For the past two months, we’ve been looking closely at all of our expenses, and examining ways to “tighten our belts” without negative impact on your water service.



Between decreased water usage by businesses, schools, and other organizations, along with an unusually cool and wet spring and summer (a season that is normally characterized by increased water use due to irrigation and recreation), our revenue has decreased this year. On the positive side, decreased water use does translates into some lowered expenses, including less wholesale water purchase, lower franchise fees, and lower utility taxes.

The change in revenue was one of the key topics during our mid-year Budget Review. Staff analyzed a range of options to reduce operating expenses—from reducing staff hours, to decreasing the amount we reinvest in keeping our water system up to date. After replacing 70% of our water mains in 1966, North City Water District has regularly reinvested in the water system, as we’ve found it’s easier to do a little every year, instead of a lot at one time. Staff proposed a 3% reduction in operating expenses across the organization, including the elimination of outside help with financial services by the end of the year. We are also discussing the possibility of eliminating a rate increase in 2021, as we’re assuming that our community may still be feeling the impacts of COVID-19 through 2021.

Staff will continue to monitor the District’s expenses and will make a final recommendation to the Board during the November/December budget period. Feel free to view our mid year budget report on our website here:

<https://northcitywater.org/resources/financial-statements-and-audits/>