

**Town of Brattleboro COVID-19 Update**  
**March 14, 2020**  
**2:15pm**

*NOTE: This news release is about governmental action. Please see the end of this news release for a reminder about how individuals can obtain information that is up-to-date and accurate regarding the evolution of this public health threat and actions every individual person can take to protect ourselves, our families, and our broader community.*

**An Update to the Community from Brattleboro Town Manager Peter Elwell:**

The United States Government and the State of Vermont are operating under State of Emergency declarations issued by President Trump and Governor Scott related to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. While a separate local State of Emergency is not necessary in Brattleboro at this time, the Town of Brattleboro has implemented a variety of emergency actions and is planning to scale-up local emergency actions, if necessary.

Fire Chief Mike Bucossi, who also is the Town's Emergency Management Director, is in close ongoing communication with Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, Rescue Inc., and other emergency health service providers. Chief Bucossi and Town Manager Peter Elwell are in daily communication with the Vermont Department of Health and Vermont Emergency Management. Through this coordination, they are not only ensuring the preparedness of Brattleboro town government but also assisting in the preparedness of first responders throughout southeastern Vermont. All other members of the Town's senior management team are maintaining similarly close contact with their colleagues in State government and others to ensure that the Town's actions are taken in concert with similar actions to protect the public throughout Vermont and beyond.

The following summary of the Town's actions on this matter are separated into "Emergency Services," "Non-Emergency and Administrative Support Services," and "Representative Town Meeting and Other Meetings":

**EMERGENCY SERVICES**

- Dispatch is screening for COVID-19 on all calls involving any flu-like symptoms.
- Inter-agency protocols for handling potential COVID-19 patients are in place, including details such as how this type of response will differ from normal EMS protocols, what special protective equipment will be used, how affected equipment will be cleaned after the call, etc.
- BFD is handling all other emergency calls as normal.
- Police operations are continuing as normal.
- Both BPD and BFD have implemented best practices for more rigorous than normal cleaning of facilities and equipment.
- Only essential personnel will be allowed inside the fire stations until further notice.
- Both BPD and BFD have plans in place for how additional special procedures will be implemented if our area experiences increased impacts from COVID-19.
- Contingency plans include coordination with other emergency service providers in our region for mutual aid coverage of essential services, as needed.

## **NON-EMERGENCY AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES**

- All departments have implemented best practices for more rigorous than normal cleaning of facilities and equipment.
- All departments are currently remaining open for business with the public during normal business hours and all field services are being provided as normal.
- Town staff is doing as much outgoing business as possible via telephone and computer.
- We are encouraging the public to do as much Town business as possible over the phone and online. If you have a question about whether a particular transaction or interaction with Town staff can be accomplished this way, please call or email the applicable department.
- This coming week, some employees will begin working from home some of the time, but we don't at this time expect that the public will see any reduction in levels of service.
- Employees are being cross-trained to keep as much of Town government as possible functioning normally if we experience future staffing shortages due to quarantine requirements or other factors.
- Special procedures are being implemented at the Water Treatment Plant and Wastewater Treatment Facilities in close coordination with the Vermont Department of Health and other authorities.
- Fire Safety and Rental Housing inspections have been canceled for at least the next 2 weeks.
- Brooks Memorial Library remains open, but some programs and events at the library are being canceled. If you have a question about any particular program or event, please check the library website or contact the library.
- The circulation staff at the library are wearing protective gloves. Other administrative staff are taking similar personal protective measures, as needed.
- The Gibson-Aiken Center remains open and most Recreation programming is currently continuing as scheduled, but the playoffs for the men's and women's basketball leagues have been canceled. Additional cancellations are expected. If you have a question about any particular program or event, please check the Recreation and Parks Department's website or contact the department.
- Town officials are coordinating with a variety of community organizations regarding emerging community needs that extend beyond the scope of our normal Town government services.

## **REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING (RTM) AND OTHER PUBLIC MEETINGS**

- The Selectboard is being kept informed about the actions Town staff is taking to prepare for and respond to COVID-19.
- The Selectboard will consider possible additional Town actions at its meeting this coming Tuesday, March 17, at 6:15pm, at the Municipal Center.
- The Selectboard also may hold special meetings (in addition to its twice-per-month regularly scheduled meetings) if it becomes necessary for the Selectboard to take urgent action(s) as the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve.
- During its March 17 meeting, the Selectboard will consider options related to holding or postponing RTM, which currently is scheduled for next Saturday, March 21, at 8:30am, at Brattleboro Area Middle School's Multi-Purpose Room.
- It is necessary for the Selectboard to consider such options because of health professionals' advice to practice social distancing as a means of "flattening the curve" or slowing the spread of COVID-19.
- Smaller gatherings for other Town meetings will continue to be held until such time as they are either prohibited by higher authority or are deemed imprudent by local decision makers. These decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, considering factors such as the size of the gathering, the purpose of the meeting, the implications of postponement or cancellation, and the alternatives for accomplishing the purpose of the meeting by other legal means.
- If you are interested in the status of any particular upcoming Town meeting, please contact the applicable Town official or employee to inquire or express a concern.

REMINDER: For current and accurate information about the spread of COVID-19 and about actions individuals should take, please call 2-1-1 or visit the Vermont Department of Health's website. That site includes links to additional reliable resources, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization. You can go to the Health Department's COVID-19 page directly at <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/infectious-disease/2019-novel-coronavirus> or can link to it by clicking on "Coronavirus Information" under "News" on the right side of the Town's homepage at <https://www.brattleboro.org/>. The Health Department site is updated every day and even more often, when needed.