

Town of Brattleboro
COVID-19 Response Status
March 19, 2020
1:15pm

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. The Town of Brattleboro, as a subdivision of the State of Vermont, is taking emergency actions in accordance with Governor Scott's declaration of a State of Emergency for all of Vermont.

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 at least daily communication with the Vermont Department of Health and Vermont Emergency Management. All other members of the Town's 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.

WHAT IS NEW TODAY

- Selectboard member Dave Schoales has resigned so that Selectboard member-elect Ian Goodnow can be appointed. This will allow the composition of the Selectboard to change in the manner decided by the voters at the same time when that transition normally would take place. The Town's Charter states that "newly elected Selectboard members' terms shall begin on the first Monday following the final adjournment of the annual Representative Town Meeting." Due to the postponement of this year's Representative Town Meeting, the commencement of Ian Goodnow's service would have been delayed indefinitely. Instead, a special Selectboard meeting will be held soon so that the continuing 4 Selectboard members can appoint Ian Goodnow to fill the vacancy created by Dave Schoales' resignation.

The following information has previously been announced by the Town to the community. Some of the items have been modified to update the details. The information is separated into sections, as follows: "Overall Status of Town Government's Daily Operations," "Emergency Services," "Non-Emergency and Administrative Support Services," and "Public Meetings":

OVERALL STATUS OF TOWN GOVERNMENT'S DAILY OPERATIONS

- All Town facilities are closed to the public until further notice.
- All Town departments are available to the public via telephone, email, USPS, and delivery services.
- Some employees are working from home. Other employees continue to report to work. Employees who choose to stay home (not working) are using their own leave time. Employees who are sent home (not working) are receiving their usual wages.
- Employee cross-training will keep Town government functioning as normally as possible if we experience staffing shortages due to quarantine requirements or other factors.
- All departments have implemented best practices for more rigorous than normal cleaning of facilities and equipment.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

- Dispatch is screening for COVID-19 on all calls.
- All emergency services are conducting “doorway assessments” for COVID-19 before entering into buildings.
- 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 emergency response protocols, what special protective equipment will be used, how affected equipment will be cleaned after the call, etc.
- Police Officers are responding to medical calls only when there is an in-progress safety concern (e.g. a situation in which someone is threatening to hurt themselves or other people).
- Both BPD and BFD have implemented best practices for more rigorous than normal cleaning of facilities and equipment, for the use of personal protective equipment, and for decontamination (when needed) after calls.
- 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

- The Water Treatment Plant and Wastewater Treatment Facilities have implemented special procedures in close coordination with the Vermont Department of Health and other authorities.
- Water+Sewer crews will not enter private buildings until further notice. People who experience service problems should call the Department of Public Works, as usual. A DPW crew will address the situation on the outside of the building. If that does not resolve the issue, then the owner/customer will need to hire a private plumber to address the issue on the interior of the building.
- Until further notice, the Town will not shut-off water service to any customer as a result of that customer becoming delinquent on payment of water+sewer fees.
- Parking Enforcement is discontinued until further notice.
- Until further notice, the Town Clerk’s Office will waive late fees for any dog licensed after April 1.
- The Planning Services Department is accepting zoning permit and development applications by mail or email. Any application that can be administratively issued will be processed. Any application requiring a hearing will be delayed until such time as public meetings resume.
- Fire Safety and Rental Housing inspections are canceled until further notice.
- The Police Department is not performing Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) verifications until further notice.
- Brooks Memorial Library is closed until further notice, but is offering “take out” services for people who reserve books and other materials to pick-up at the front door.
- All Recreation and Parks facilities are closed until further notice and all Recreation programming has been canceled until further notice.
- The Recreation and Parks Department is accepting mail-in registration for Spring Youth Sports. Participants will receive a credit on their account for program cancellations.
- Businesses who are repaying loans to the Town’s Small Business Assistance Program can defer (without penalty or additional interest) their monthly payments until further notice.
- Due to the closure of Town facilities, individual pay-as-you-throw bags will not be sold at the Treasurer’s Office and the Gibson-Aiken Center until further notice. Packages of five pay-as-you-throw bags are still available at retail outlets.
- 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.
- All reservations for use of Town facilities by non-Town organizations are cancelled until further notice.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

- The Selectboard's next regularly scheduled meeting will be on April 7.
- 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.
- Due to the Governor's order prohibiting gatherings of more than 50 people, the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) scheduled for March 21 has been canceled. It will be re-warned when it becomes legal and prudent to do so. The current plan is to re-warn RTM on April 7 and to hold RTM on May 9.
- All other Town board, committee, and commission meetings are cancelled until further notice.