

Town of Brattleboro
COVID-19 Response Status
March 24, 2020
1:00pm

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.

Please visit the Town's website at www.brattleboro.org for extensive information about COVID-19, its impacts, and actions being taken to address those impacts. All of the Town's daily updates are posted there, along with links to the Vermont Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization. Most importantly, the Town's homepage includes links to numerous resources for informing and assisting individuals, families, businesses, and other organizations. All of this information is being reviewed daily to ensure you can rely on the Town's site for current and accurate information throughout the COVID-19 emergency.

WHAT IS NEW TODAY

- In furtherance of the Governor's announcement yesterday that all businesses should implement work-from-home practices "to the maximum extent possible" and his suggestion that additional restrictions on people's movement will be announced tomorrow, the Town has increased the number of employees who are telecommuting and is finalizing plans for full closure of certain non-emergency services and administrative functions.
- The status of each separate area of Town government will be announced in detail if it does become necessary to fully close any functions or services.

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.
- Many 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 but "on call") are receiving their usual wages.

- All departments have implemented best practices for more rigorous than normal cleaning of facilities and equipment.
- 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.

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

Water+Sewer

- 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

- Parking Enforcement is discontinued until further notice.

Dog Licenses

- Until further notice, the Town Clerk’s Office will waive late fees for any dog licensed after April 1.

Planning+Zoning Permits

- 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 Department

- Fire Safety and Rental Housing inspections are canceled until further notice.

Police Department

- The Police Department is not performing Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) verifications until further notice.

Brooks Memorial Library

- 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.
- Please go to www.brookslibraryvt.org for information on obtaining a library card and reserving materials. Library cards that are due to expire can be renewed on a month-by-month basis until the library reopens. Fees for renewing non-resident cards are suspended until further notice.
- All book drops are closed until further notice. Please hold onto borrowed materials until further notice. Due dates will be extended (even if you receive an overdue reminder) and cards will not be blocked for overdue materials.

Recreation+Parks

- All Recreation and Parks facilities are closed until further notice and all Recreation programming has been canceled until further notice.
- The closure of all Recreation and Parks facilities includes the equipment (benches and playground equipment) at our parks. That equipment is not being regularly sanitized. Signage has been installed to warn the public. The Town is inviting people to enjoy the open green spaces in the parks where you can get some fresh air and exercise while still practicing social distancing.
- 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.

Small Business Assistance Program Loans

- 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.

Curbside Garbage, Recycling, + Compost Program

- 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.
- Some residents have asked the Town to suspend the pay-as-you-throw program so that no one would have to buy the yellow and purple bags until further notice. Our pay-as-you-throw system is required for the Town to comply with a State-mandate to have “variable rate pricing” for garbage collection and disposal (i.e. the more one throws away the more one pays). The Town has asked the State if we can temporarily suspend the pay-as-you-throw system. We have not yet received the State’s permission to do that.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

- The Town is reviewing options for allowing remote connection by phone and/or internet for public meeting participants and the public in a manner that will comply with the State of Vermont’s Open Meetings Law and the State is considering emergency action to amend the physical location requirements of the Open Meetings Law to facilitate holding public meetings by electronic means. We expect to be able to announce more details about this in the next few days.
- 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.
- The Representative Town Meeting (RTM) that would have been on March 21 was cancelled. 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.