Town of Brattleboro
COVID-19 Response Status
March 27, 2020
2:00pm

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

The Brattleboro Police Department (BPD) has transitioned to Level III of its Emergency Response Plan for COVID-19, as follows:

- BPD is still patrolling the roadways, walking downtown, and visiting merchants that are open, adhering to social distancing best practices when encountering people face-to-face.
- BPD is answering life safety calls involving physical harm or the threat of harm to individuals. Non life safety calls for service are being handled via appropriate technology (i.e. phone, email, etc.) Patrol Commanders are determining whether or not a physical response is warranted.
- Dispatch is fully staffed 24/7 and is screening for COVID-19 on all calls.
- BPD Clerks are working from home. Public Records requests are being accepted by email, but the majority will not be able to be processed until the "Stay Home - Stay Safe" order is lifted.

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.
- In keeping with the Governor's "Stay Home – Stay Safe" order, most administrative employees are working at home. While we are not in our usual places interacting with the public in the usual manner, we are here for you during these extraordinary times. We have made arrangements for employees to conduct many of their usual activities from their homes. Some will continue to come to the office occasionally to complete tasks that can only be completed there. Importantly, all email communications and most telephone communications are functioning exactly as they do during normal office operations, but we will only sporadically be able to retrieve and reply to communications via USPS + delivery services. Field crews are performing limited ongoing field work to protect public health and safety, and all field employees are "on call" every day for addressing urgent maintenance issues (like a water main break, a snowstorm, etc.). If there is anything you need from your Town government, please contact us. Those of us who have direct dial phone numbers and individual email addresses can be contacted in the usual way. If you don't have that information, please use the contact information for each department listed below under "Non-Emergency and Administrative Support Services."
- 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

- Emergency services are still being provided by the Police Department (BPD) and Fire Department (BFD).
- Both BPD and BFD have instituted policies that adjust their normal procedures to reflect COVID-19 best practices advice from public health experts.
- Dispatch is fully staffed 24/7 and is screening for COVID-19 on all calls.
- Both BPD and BFD are conducting "doorway assessments" for COVID-19 before entering into buildings.
- 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.
- BPD is still patrolling the roadways, walking downtown, and visiting merchants that are open, adhering to social distancing best practices when encountering people face-to-face.
- BPD is answering life safety calls involving physical harm or the threat of harm to individuals. Non life safety calls for service are being handled via appropriate technology (i.e. phone, email, etc.) Patrol Commanders are determining whether or not a physical response is warranted.
- 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 Utilities

- Town water+sewer facilities are being operated. Staffing and some procedures have been adjusted to reflect COVID-19 best practices advice from public health experts, but the public should notice no change in water or sewer service.
- For general water+sewer questions, please call 802-254-4255.
- 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.
- Parking related inquiries should be directed to the Town Manager's Office (see immediately below).

Town Manager's Office

- All employees are working primarily from home, coming into the office only when necessary.
- Direct contact phone numbers and email addresses remain operational.
- For general information, please call 802-251-8151 or email townmanager@brattleboro.org.

Town Clerk's Office

- All employees are working from home to the extent that they are able.
  Some are coming into the office, but only when necessary.
- Direct contact phone numbers and email addresses remain operational.
- For general information, please call 802-251-8157 or email townclerk@brattleboro.org.
- Services requiring on-site visits to the Town Clerk's Office are suspended until further notice.
- Until further notice, the Town Clerk's Office will waive late fees for any dog licensed after April 1.

Public Works Department

- Administrative employees are working from home, coming into the office only when necessary.
- Operations employees continue to address health and safety concerns and are "on call" to perform urgent maintenance services, as needed.
- Direct contact phone numbers and email addresses remain operational.
- For general information, please call 802-254-4255.

Planning Services Department

- All employees are working from home to the extent that they are able.
  Some are coming into the office, but only when necessary.
- Direct contact phone numbers and email addresses remain operational.
- For general information, please call 802-251-8154 or email planning@brattleboro.org.
- 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.

Brooks Memorial Library

- Brooks Memorial Library is closed until further notice.
- All employees are working from home to the extent that they are able.
  Some are coming into the library, but only when necessary.
- Direct contact phone numbers and email addresses remain operational.
- For general information, please call 802-254-5290 (Extension 0) or email info@brookslibraryvt.org.
- Please go to www.brookslibraryvt.org for information on obtaining a library card, which will allow access to online resources. 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. If you encounter a problem using your card, please call 524-5290 (extension 0) or email info@brookslibraryvt.org.
- All book drops are closed. 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.
- Follow us on Facebook @BrooksMemorialLibrary and @BrooksMemorialLibraryCR or on Twitter @brookslibraryvt. Check the library website for updates and to subscribe to the online newsletter.

Recreation+Parks Department

- All Recreation and Parks facilities are closed until further notice and all Recreation programming has been canceled until further notice.

- Recreation employees are working from home to the extent that they are able. Some are coming into the Recreation facilities, but only when necessary.
- Parks employees continue to address health and safety concerns and are "on call" to perform urgent maintenance services, as needed.
- Direct contact phone numbers and email addresses remain operational.
- For general information, please call 802-254-5808 or email recreation@brattleboro.org.
- 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.

Assessor's Office

- All employees are working from home to the extent that they are able. Some are coming into the office, but only when necessary.
- Direct contact phone numbers and email addresses remain operational.
- For general information, please call 802-251-8156.
- The deadline for businesses to submit personal property tax data has been postponed from April 20 to July 20, consistent with the annual income tax filing deadline being postponed by both the IRS and the State of Vermont from April 15 to July 15.

Finance Department

- All employees (including the Treasurer's Office) are working from home to the extent that they are able. Some are coming into the office, but only when necessary.
- Direct contact phone numbers and email addresses remain operational.
- For general information, please call 802-251-8152 (Finance) or 802-251-8153 (Treasurer's Office).

Human Resources

- The Human Resources Director is working primarily from home, coming into the office only when necessary.
- The Human Resources Director can be contacted at the usual phone number (802-251-8135) and email address (snix@brattleboro.org).

Fire Department *(non-emergency and administrative support)*

- Employees are working from home to the extent that they are able. Some are coming into the fire stations, but only when necessary.
- Direct contact phone numbers and email addresses remain operational.
- For general Fire Department information, please call 802-254-4831.
- Fire Safety and Rental Housing inspections are canceled until further notice.
- Burn Permits are still required for any open air fires. To apply for a Burn Permit, please visit the Fire Department's website at www.brattleborofd.org.

Police Department *(non-emergency and administrative support)*

- Most employees are working from home to the extent that they are able. Some are coming into the Police Station, but only when necessary.
- Direct contact phone numbers and email addresses remain operational.
- For general Police Department information, please call 802-257-7946 or email bpd@sover.net.
- BPD Clerks are working from home. Public Records requests are being accepted by email, but the majority will not be able to be processed until the "Stay Home - Stay Safe" order is lifted.
- The Police Department is not performing Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) verifications until further notice.

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 are not being 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 early next week.
- 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.