

TOWN OF BRATTLEBORO COVID-19 TIMELINE

IN ADDITION TO THE SPECIFIC TOWN ACTIONS NOTED BELOW, TOWN OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN PARTICIPATING IN NUMEROUS FREQUENT CONFERENCE CALLS AND ONLINE MEETINGS WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS, BRATTLEBORO BUSINESS LEADERS, BRATTLEBORO SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND OTHER INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS. THE PURPOSE AND RESULTS OF THESE MEETINGS IS TO ENSURE WE ARE GIVING AND RECEIVING ACCURATE INFORMATION AND TO MAXIMIZE THE IMPACT OF OUR ACTIONS THROUGH COLLABORATION.

Wednesday, February 26

- Fire Chief Mike Bucossi, who also is the Town's Emergency Management Director, starts creating a Town COVID-19 Incident Response Plan (as an extension of the Town's overall Local Emergency Management Plan or LEMP), orders applicable supplies, opens communications with Brattleboro Memorial Hospital (BMH) and Rescue Inc. for joint preparations, and starts working with BMH on regional information and training sessions that were held on March 5 and March 10.

Thursday, February 27

- Town Manager Peter Elwell and Chief Bucossi open communications with the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) and make a conscious decision to rely on VDH for advice to the public about the virus (limiting the Town's public communications to the scope of Town government actions).

Friday, February 28

- "Coronavirus Information" link to VDH website added to the "News" section on the homepage of the Town's website.
- Town Manager Elwell provides first comprehensive COVID-19 update to Selectboard and senior management team.

Saturday, February 29

[Community Forum at the Library re: Automobile Break-ins.]

Monday, March 2

- Bucossi and Elwell open communications with Vermont Emergency Management (VEM).

Tuesday, March 3

[Town Meeting Day Election]

- Town issues first COVID-19 public update in the form of a Town news release.

Wednesday, March 4

- Town and BMH announce March 10 information and training session for municipal officials and first responders from throughout southeastern Vermont.

Thursday, March 5

[Bomb scare at State Office Building requires lockdown of Municipal Center.]

- Bucossi represents Town at public information meeting at BMH.

Friday, March 6

VDH begins issuing daily updates.

Sunday, March 8

VDH announces first COVID-19 case in Vermont.

Tuesday, March 10

- Town issues rumor control news release emphasizing that “We are in a state of heightened awareness and preparation to take emergency response action(s). We are not at this time in active response mode.”
- Town and BMH co-host regional information and training session for municipal officials and first responders at the Central Fire Station.

Wednesday, March 11

State Emergency Operations Center activated.

[RTM Information Meeting]

Thursday, March 12

- Town assists in correcting rumor of a confirmed positive COVID-19 case at the Brattleboro Retreat.
- BFD inspections of rental properties and commercial properties suspended for at least 2 weeks.
- Town begins preparations for maximizing the ability of employees to work productively at home.

Friday, March 13

- Town of Brattleboro COVID-19 ticker message starts running on both BCTV channels.
- Rabies clinic at BFD Station 2 (scheduled for the next day, March 14) cancelled.
- Adult basketball league (both men’s and women’s) playoffs cancelled.

Governor Scott declares a COVID-19 State of Emergency in Vermont.

Saturday, March 14

- Town issues first comprehensive COVID-19 public update of Town actions (as listed below) in the form of a Town news release.

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.

Sunday, March 15

Governor Scott orders all Vermont schools to close.

Monday, March 16

Governor Scott orders all bars + restaurants to cease "dine in" service, to be enforced by local Health Officers.

- Town begins issuing daily COVID-19 updates.
- Town creates robust COVID-19 presence on homepage of Town website (including all Town updates plus links to VDH, CDC, WHO, and numerous resources for individuals, families, and businesses).
- Town Manager Elwell announces: "Due to the Governor's order prohibiting gatherings of more than 50 people, Town staff is recommending to the Selectboard that the Representative Town Meeting scheduled for March 21 be canceled and that it be re-warned when it becomes legal and prudent to do so. The Selectboard will consider that matter at its meeting tomorrow, March 17, at 6:15pm at the Municipal Center."
- All Town facilities will be closed to the public beginning Wednesday, March 18, and all Town departments will continue to be available to the public via telephone and email.
- All regularly scheduled Town board, committee, and commission meetings (except Selectboard meetings) are cancelled until further notice.
- All reservations for use of Town facilities by non-Town organizations are cancelled until further notice.
- Some Town employees begin working at home.
- Town department updates include the following:
 - BFD initiates offer to assist anyone with special needs (for groceries, prescriptions, etc.)
 - Police Officers will be 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).

- BPD is not performing Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) verifications until further notice.
- BPD is not receiving parking fines until further notice.
- The Planning Services Department will be 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.
- The Town Clerk's Office has extended the deadline for dog licensing until further notice.
- Brooks Memorial Library begins offering curbside pick-up service and advises patrons not to return any borrowed materials until further notice.
- The Recreation and Parks Department is taking mail-in registration for Spring Youth Sports. Participants will receive a credit on their account for program cancellations.
- 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.

Tuesday, March 17

- Parking Enforcement is discontinued until further notice.
- Regular Selectboard Meeting is held, as scheduled, in the evening. In addition to awarding a bid for construction of the long-awaited skatepark and a few other matters of non-COVID business, the Selectboard also takes the following COVID-specific actions:
 - Approves allowing businesses who are repaying loans to the Town's Small Business Assistance Program to defer their monthly payments until further notice.
 - Directs that 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.
 - Cancels Representative Town Meeting (RTM) that had been scheduled for March 21. Plan is to re-warn on April 7 to hold RTM on May 9, if possible.

Wednesday, March 18

- 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.
- 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.
- Selectboard member Dave Schoales resigns so that Selectboard member-elect Ian Goodnow can be appointed at the same time as he would have been sworn-in during normal circumstances.

Friday, March 20

- A special Selectboard meeting is warned to be held on Monday, March 23, at 5:30pm, in the Selectboard Meeting Room at the Municipal Center, so that the Selectboard can (1) appoint Ian Goodnow (consistent with the results of the March 3 election) to the seat that became vacant upon Dave Schoales' resignation and (2) elect Selectboard officers.

Monday, March 23

Governor Scott announces intention to further restrict movement of public and operation of businesses.

- Town staff continues to be available for remote communications with the public during normal business hours. However, in keeping with increasingly restrictive social distancing requirements and advice from State Government and public health experts, fewer Town employees are reporting to their usual workplaces.

- Special Selectboard meeting at 5:30pm. The Municipal Center is open to the public from 5:15pm until 15 minutes after the meeting to allow public access to the meeting. The Selectboard takes the following actions:
 - Appoints Ian Goodnow to the seat vacated by Dave Schoales' resignation.
 - Elects Tim Wessel as Selectboard Chair.
 - Elects Liz McLoughlin as Selectboard Vice-Chair.
 - Elects Ian Goodnow as Selectboard Clerk.

Tuesday, March 24

- The Town's daily update contains this statement: "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, if necessary." *Governor Scott issues "Stay Home – Stay Safe" order to remain in effect through April 15.*

Wednesday, March 25

- Normal office operations close down and most Town employees begin working from home.
- Emergency services are still being provided by the Police and Fire Departments, but both departments have instituted policies that adjust their normal procedures to reflect COVID-19 best practices advice from public health experts.
- 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.
- Library curbside take-out services are suspended until further notice.
- The deadline for businesses to submit personal property tax data to the Town is 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.

Thursday, March 26

Governor Scott orders schools to stay closed for the remainder of the school year.

- The Town's daily update includes this statement from Town Manager Elwell to the community: "In keeping with the Governor's "Stay Home – Stay Safe" order, this is the first full day of Town operations with most employees working from 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 many administrative employees to conduct most or all 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. Field crews will be performing limited ongoing field work to ensure that health and safety concerns are promptly addressed, and all field employees will be 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 just as you normally would. If you don't have that information, please use the contact information for each department that is listed below under Non-Emergency and Administrative Support Services." {Please see the March 26 daily update for additional details, including the list of departmental phone numbers and email addresses.}

Friday, March 27

- BPD adjusts its operations, as follows:
 - Patrolling the roadways, walking downtown, and visiting merchants that are open, adhering to social distancing best practices when encountering people face-to-face.
 - Answering life safety calls involving physical harm or the threat of harm to individuals.
 - Handling non life safety calls for service 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.
 - 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.

Monday, March 30

- The Town’s daily update includes this statement from Town Manager Elwell to the community: “We continue to make adjustments in Town operations as we come to clearer understandings of what is possible during these unprecedented circumstances. As we make these adjustments, our goal is to remain as productive as possible in service to the community while fully complying with the Governor’s ‘Stay Home – Stay Safe’ order. The current status of particular Town services is set forth each day in the function-by-function summary” of Town operations.
- The Town announces that annual spring leaf pickup service will be provided on Friday, April 17, and Friday, May 1, because curbside solid waste collection is continuing under the “essential services” provisions of the Governor’s “Stay Home – Stay Safe” order and because the fresh air and exercise involved in doing yard work is a safe and healthy way for people to take a break from staying indoors during the COVID-19 emergency.

Governor Scott orders out-of-state visitors to Vermont to self-quarantine for 14 days.

Governor Scott signs emergency legislation authorizing COVID-19 financial assistance and temporarily modifying the Open Meetings Law to allow electronic meetings with no designated physical location.

Tuesday, March 31

- A special Selectboard meeting is warned for Thursday, April 2, at 6:15pm on GoToMeeting.
- The Town also announces that meetings of Town boards, commissions, and committees will resume on a case-by-case basis using the GoToMeeting platform for remote-only meetings (with no physical location) until after the COVID-19 emergency has passed.
- The State advises that the Town cannot temporarily suspend the pay-as-you-throw program.
- The Recreation+Parks Department announces cancellation of numerous seasonal special events.

Thursday, April 2

- The Selectboard holds its first remote-only (no physical location) meeting using GoToMeeting.

Wednesday, April 8

- Because many buildings are currently in a state of prolonged shutdown, the Town’s Water Department reminds all building owners that water lines within buildings should be flushed to keep the water supply safe, stating that “While the Town is continuing to deliver water to the meter that complies with all drinking water standards and has a trace of chlorine for disinfection, the water quality within the interior piping of a building will deteriorate if not used.”
- The annual Winter Parking Ban is lifted.

Thursday, April 9

- Morningside Cemetery opens for the season. The Town reminds anyone visiting the cemetery to adhere to all the requirements of social distancing.

Friday, April 10

Governor Scott extends "Stay Home – Stay Safe" order to remain in effect through May 15.

- The Town furloughs 3 Parking Enforcement employees due to the complete closure of that function.

Monday, April 13

- Brooks Memorial Library staff begins offering assistance in completing the 2020 U.S. Census form.
- The Recreation and Parks Department's spring youth sports season is cancelled.
- The Planning Services Department resumes issuing minor zoning permits that can be approved digitally by Town staff.

Tuesday, April 14

- The Public Works Department announces that the semi-annual flushing of water mains will be completed April 23 through May 11. This essential maintenance activity ensures the continued safety of the Town's drinking water.
- The Police Department announces that alarm fees will be waived until further notice.

Friday, April 17

Governor Scott reduces "Stay Home – Stay Safe" restrictions to begin the gradual resumption of business activity. Permitted activities are restricted mostly to "micro crews" of 1 or 2 people and mostly to outdoor work.

- The Town announces that wi-fi is available near the Main Street entrance to Brooks Memorial Library and can be accessed from cars parked in front of the building.

Friday, April 24

Governor Scott "opens the spigot another quarter turn" by reducing the "Stay Home – Stay Safe" restrictions to continue the gradual resumption of business activity. Permitted activities now include "micro crews" of up to 5 people and now include some limited indoor activities.

- The Town's daily update includes this statement from Town Manager Elwell to the community: "After weeks of intense activity to set up and refine remote operations, the past 10 days or so have been characterized by the steady maintenance of the status quo during the deepest part of the "Stay Home – Stay Safe" restrictions. We are now seeing the very slight re-opening of some activities in society (what Governor Scott has called "re-opening the spigot a quarter turn at a time") and we are planning for how to slowly, methodically, and safely reopen Town facilities and resume in-person Town services. Daily updates next week and beyond will include detailed information about the steps we will take "a quarter turn at a time" to ramp back up to something resembling normal operations. In the meantime, we thank everyone for your patience and your adherence to the social distancing restrictions that are frustrating for all of us but also are essential to our individual and collective well-being. Stay safe. Stay strong. Stay well."

Wednesday, April 29

- The Town’s daily update includes this statement from Town Manager Elwell to the community:
“On Monday, May 4, all Town offices will resume daily on-site office functions, in accordance with the following:
 - The exterior entrances to all Town facilities will remain locked at all times.
 - Signs will be posted at all exterior entrances clearly indicating that no one may enter the building if they have any symptoms of respiratory illness (fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath).
 - There will be only 1 employee in each office at any one time, except when more than one employee is necessary to complete a required task.
 - Employees who are not in the office will continue to work from home in the same manner as they have been during the full closure of Town offices since March 27.
 - The public is requested to continue to do as much Town business as possible remotely (by email, internet, phone, or mail). **Please note that this includes the payment of property taxes and utility bills. Those can be paid by mail or online. By Monday, they will also be able to be paid by dropping an envelope containing your check (no cash) into a locked black drop box that will be attached to the large wooden light pole in the parking lot behind the Municipal Center.**
 - When an on-site visit is necessary for a particular individual to comply with a Town requirement or to receive a Town service, such visits can be arranged in advance (by making an appointment) or at the time of the visit (by calling the applicable office).
 - Anyone who is not a Town employee will be met at the exterior door by a Town employee, escorted into the applicable office, and then escorted out of the building.
 - Making an appointment in advance is strongly encouraged for two reasons:
 1. Since offices will be staffed by only 1 employee at a time, there will be unscheduled times each day when any particular office is not available to the public. There also may be some scheduled closures in certain departments (e.g. for an entire morning, afternoon, or day). Those will be announced to the public in advance.
 2. Since only 1 visitor will be allowed in any office at any given time, visitors who do not make an appointment in advance may have to wait outside the building until it is their turn to enter.
 - During the visit, the 1 employee and 1 visitor will:
 - wear masks at all times (the Town will provide a mask to any visitor who does not have one),
 - wear gloves or use hand sanitizer before handling documents, and
 - abide by social distancing best practices (such as standing no closer than 6 feet apart).
 - Town employees will use disinfectant cleaner to wipe down all counters, door knobs, and other commonly touched surfaces at the beginning of each shift, after each visitor, and at the end of each shift, paying particular attention to wiping down any surface that is touched by any visitor.
 - Restrooms will not be available for public use. If an employee allows a visitor to use a restroom in an emergency, that employee will use disinfectant cleaner to wipe down all fixtures, handles, and touched surfaces immediately after the visitor leaves.
 - Town employees will continue to do as much work as possible with other Town employees via email, internet, and phone. When 2 or more employees must meet face-to-face to complete a particular task, they will adhere to the same requirements as when providing 1-to-1 services to visitors:
 - wear masks at all times,
 - wear gloves or use hand sanitizer before handling documents, and
 - abide by social distancing best practices (such as standing no closer than 6 feet apart).
 - Brooks Memorial Library remains closed to the public but cardholders may request (via phone or email) materials for curbside pick-up beginning Monday, May 4. Details will be available at www.brookslibraryvt.org. Borrowed items also may be returned through the big blue metal bookdrop box in the Municipal Center parking lot.

- The status of Recreation programming remains unchanged at this time. In the weeks ahead, the Recreation and Parks Department will provide an update about the planning for resumption of certain programs and activities as COVID-19 circumstances permit.
- The status of all emergency services and outdoor work crews is unchanged at this time.”

Friday, May 1

Governor Scott reduces “Stay Home – Stay Safe” restrictions to allow further phased expansion of construction, manufacturing, and distribution operations, while requiring enhanced public health training for larger operations. Governor Scott also announces that mask use is required on public transit and in public transportation facilities.

Monday, May 4

- Town offices resume daily on-site office functions in accordance with the restrictions listed on page 8 of this timeline.
- West River Park opens for the season. No organized group activities will be allowed until further notice, but the grounds and West River access are available for public use. All social distancing requirements must be followed while visiting the park.

Governor Scott reduces “Stay Home – Stay Safe” restrictions to allow the phased restart of elective medical and surgical procedures.

Friday, May 8

- The Recreation and Parks Department provides the following update regarding the status of its facilities:
 - The Fred H. Harris Tennis/Pickleball Courts at Living Memorial Park are open.
 - The frisbee golf course at Living Memorial Park remains open.
 - All softball fields are available to families for informal kickball, wiffleball etc. Softball fields are not yet open for more formal team activities (games or practices).
 - Basketball courts remain closed until further notice.
 - The Dog Park at Living Memorial Park remains closed until further notice due to COVID-19 and being recently reseeded to rejuvenate the turf.
 - All park equipment remains closed (benches, picnic tables, playgrounds etc.) until further notice because it is impossible to sanitize that equipment in between users.
 - Restrooms at Living Memorial Park and West River Park remain closed until further notice.
 - We encourage everyone to enjoy our facilities and green spaces while following the above guidelines and the following:
 - Keep Social Distancing (everyone wears masks + stays at least 6-feet apart whenever possible).
 - Contact sports/games are prohibited.
 - Please use the “Arrive, Play and Leave” approach to using these facilities.
 - No gatherings of more than 10 people.
 - All users must be Vermont residents (in accordance with the Governor’s executive orders)

Monday, May 11

- The Recreation and Parks Department begins taking Summer Camp Registrations and announces that the camp will operate this summer in accordance with social distancing guidelines established by the State of Vermont and recommended by public health professionals.

Tuesday, May 12

Governor Scott announces that lodging businesses can reopen on May 22 in accordance with State-imposed restrictions.

Wednesday, May 13

Governor Scott announces that retail businesses can reopen on May 18 in accordance with State-imposed restrictions.