

Report to Council

Report Title: COVID-19 Municipal Response – August 11, 2020 Update

Prepared By: Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

Department: Clerk's

Date: August 11, 2020

Report Number: CLK2020-24 **File Number:** C11CL, P03CO

Attachments: Information Bulletin – July 31, 2020

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CLK2020-24 – COVID-19 Municipal Response – August 11, 2020 Update, prepared by Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk for information purposes and further confirms and ratifies all operational decisions, procedures, and cancellations put in place by staff, and the Municipal Emergency Control Group in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and further approves meetings of Committees and Local Boards of Council continue to occur electronically via Zoom, unless the majority of the members of the Committee have difficulty accessing the technology, in which case arrangements will be made through the Clerk's department for an in-person meeting to occur in a location that allows for physical distancing.

Report:

Background:

Staff brought forward a current total of six (6) COVID-19 Municipal Response Reports during the months of March, April, May, June, and July explaining the departmental responses and decisions taken by the Municipality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health issued an [Order](#) effective July 17, 2020 requiring the mandatory use of face coverings in public places in Grey Bruce. The order remains in effect for a period of four (4) weeks. Brockton #InItTogether cloth masks were ordered and distributed as an initiative to support local business in a collaborative way. The response from the local business community was positive.

The majority of the Province entered Stage 3 of the Reopening Plan on July 17, 2020. The Ontario government, in consultation with Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, extended all emergency orders currently in force that were made under s.7.0.2(4) of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* to July 22, 2020. The Declaration of Emergency has since expired; however, some Orders continue to remain in effect. Bruce County municipalities are evaluating and considering the appropriate time for consideration of lifting

local emergency declarations. This will not occur until the fall after school is in session and in consultation with the Grey Bruce Health Unit.

Analysis:

The Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG) continues to meet regularly to address each department's responsibilities, requirements, and proactive measures that have been taken in response to COVID-19. To date, the MECG has met twenty-four (24) times, and have another virtual meeting scheduled for August 18, 2020. The Grey Bruce Health Unit and South Bruce O.P.P. also participate in the MECG meetings to provide updates and required information related to appropriate actions in response to the pandemic.

Communications to date

The Municipality continues to be diligent in maintaining transparent and timely communication to the public throughout the pandemic. A number of news items, and social media posts have been distributed to residents daily regarding operational decisions, which will be discussed further under the Departmental Responses portion of this report.

A total of thirteen (13) Information Bulletins have been distributed (the [most recent](#) issued July 31st), three (3) Press Releases, one (1) [Order prohibiting garage sales](#) which was further [rescinded](#) in May, a [Tax/Utility Bill FAQ](#), a [Community Information Sheet](#), Special [COVID-19 Brockton Buzz](#) Issue, and several Brockton Business Newsletters.

Mayor Chris Peabody continues to provide regular COVID-19 Video Updates to the public – a total of fourteen (14) videos have been filmed to date. All of the videos are displayed on the [municipal website](#), and social media accounts, including the Municipality's [YouTube Channel](#). Totalled together the engagement of all 14 videos is 1,355 views on YouTube and 21,396 views on Facebook.

Staff have also broadcasted ten (10) Council, Court of Revision, and Committee of Adjustment Meetings through Zoom Video Conferencing and livestreamed the meetings to [YouTube](#). The full recordings of the Council, Court of Revision, and Committee of Adjustment Meetings held in April, May, June, and July are all available on YouTube and have received a combined total of 977 views - Each meeting averages approximately 100 views.

Departmental Responses

Administration:

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) continues to maintain communication with Mayor Peabody, Bruce County CAO's, the Grey Bruce Health Unit, South Bruce O.P.P., and the County of Bruce on a weekly or more frequent basis. Ms. Watson reviewed Business Continuity Plans with Department Heads and has finalized all staffing levels and back up response.

Enforcement matters continue to be dealt with by the Municipality's By-Law Enforcement Officer and Fire Prevention Officer.

Ms. Watson continues to meet regularly with Department Heads and staff continue to establish opportunities to connect and increase staff morale during this time of uncertainty while ensuring key projects move forward.

The Municipal Office will be open to the public starting August 10, 2020 with a limit of only four (4) people in the office at one time. Physical barriers and signage are in place to support the health and safety of both staff and the public. In accordance with the Grey Bruce Health Unit mandatory face covering order, residents will be required to wear a face covering, and use hand sanitizer when entering and exiting the Municipal Office.

Residents are encouraged to continue to limit unnecessary contact by making electronic payments, using the drop box at the Municipal Office and sending inquiries through email.

The majority of staff and Supervisors at the Municipal Office returned to the office as of August 4, 2020.

Eight members of the MCEG will continue to work rotating shifts until September 8, 2020 pending further evaluation.

The Recovery Sub-Committee continues to meet weekly to plan for the remaining facilities reopening. The CAO continues to consult with Bruce and Grey Municipalities to discuss re-opening plans. As the reopening process continues across the province, the Recovery Sub-Committee will make any required amendments to the plan.

Brockton Child Care Centre:

The Brockton Child Care Centre re-opened on July 6, 2020. Strict protocols from the Grey-Bruce Health Unit and the Ministry of Education are being followed. Staff were recalled and trained on the use of PPE, and new protocols. Parents were also informed of the new drop-off procedure.

As of July 27, 2020, staff were able to accept 15 children per classroom. As of September 1, 2020 all licensed child care centres and before and after school programs will be permitted to operate a full capacity while maintaining ratios and group sizes in accordance with the Child Care and Early Years act, 2014. Staff await the new guidelines and will be working through the changes to determine the staffing needs to accept additional children to the facility, maintain the space required, meet the cleaning and screening protocols and meet ratios legislated. Staff have also begun discussions with the local school boards regarding before and after school programs, and are receiving calls regarding September admissions.

Staff continue to meet with the Grey Bruce Health Unit and County of Bruce to discuss protocols. Staff are also working with additional families to service child care needs while maintaining adherence with Provincial requirements.

Building:

The Building Department continues to process building permits and conduct inspections following established protocols. Property owners who are issued building permits are reminded of their responsibility to ensure that all construction work must be done in compliance with Provincial Orders, COVID-19 protocols and guidelines.

Residents are encouraged to continue submitting or applying for building permits via email to the Chief Building Official and Building Inspector. Building permit applications and general inquiries will also continue to be accepted through the drop box at the Municipal Office.

Clerk's:

The Clerk's department continues to process and distribute all communication from the Municipality, and minute all MECG meetings. All COVID-19 pandemic Reports to Council have been distributed on Municipality's [COVID-19 Updates webpage](#) to keep the public informed.

As previously noted, the Clerk's Department continues to broadcast the electronic Council Meetings, and have been developing a plan for future broadcasting of Council Meetings after the pandemic has concluded. Clerk's staff continue to administer various meetings for Department Heads and organize and monitor all Committees or Local Boards Meetings through Zoom. This requires a member of the Clerk's department to attend all committee meetings using the zoom platform. Committee/Local Board Meetings are posted to the Municipal website's Community Calendar to allow public viewing and ensure accountability and transparency.

The Clerk's Department are also developing a plan for Committee/Local Board Meetings following the pandemic. The *COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020* which received royal assent and was declared into force on July 21, 2020, allows municipal councils and local boards to meet electronically on a permanent basis and allow municipal councils to decide if they wish to have proxy voting for their members. Staff will bring forward a report about broadcasting Council meetings as soon as possible once all quotes from potential vendors have been obtained.

The recommendation at this time is to continue having meetings of Committees and Local Boards of Council electronically via Zoom, unless the majority of the members of the Committee have difficulty accessing the technology, in which case arrangements will be made through the Clerk's department for an in-person meeting to occur in a location that allows for physical distancing. These in-person meetings are not recommended as the norm at this time because of the additional staff resources needed for adequate cleaning and disinfecting and to minimize contacts for staff and committee members.

The Clerk's Department continues to receive numerous inquiries for marriage licenses and officiant bookings. Couples and Officiants are reminded to follow provincial guidelines, and staff continue to remain informed of any changes to the licensing process from the Office of the Registrar General. A total of 52 marriage licenses have been issued to date (48 of those licenses were issued from March 13 to August 7, 2020 during COVID-19). As a comparison, in 2019, a total of 53 licenses were issued from January to August 7 (45 of those licenses were issued from March 13 to August 7, 2019).

Despite the office reopening on August 10, 2020, marriage licensing, lottery licensing and commissioning services will continue to be offered by appointment only as these matters require longer attendance in the public area of the office and require preparation time.

The contract By-Law Enforcement Officer continues to respond to enforcement calls, and has been fully trained on the role. They are also working in several other municipalities as part of our shared services agreement.

Economic Development:

Staff continue to support and advocate for Brockton businesses and their Retention Initiative. Business Recovery Toolkits and masks were distributed to the business community, and staff continue communication regarding grant opportunities.

Bruce County have completed their COVID-19 program, but are still offering a Business Safety Supply Grant which was subscribed to by many Brockton businesses. All Brockton businesses who applied to the Bruce County Pivot Grant received funding. The Saugeen Economic Development Corporation donated \$92,000 to Brockton businesses under the Rural Recovery Relief Fund.

Staff are also developing a tourism campaign in collaboration with the Brockton Visitors' Information Centre which will be launched shortly to promote Brockton 'staycation' activities.

Staff have received some inquiries for the Sidewalk Patio project and provide information as required. More information can be found at Brockton.ca/SidewalkPatio regarding the application process.

As previously mentioned in the last COVID-19 Municipal Response Report, Durham Street Park in Walkerton opened on July 3, 2020. Increase signage and promotion has been distributed for the park. The park has seen an increase in visitors, and has increased engagement with the local business community.

Staff continue to release [Brockton Business Newsletters](#) focused on the COVID-19 pandemic to ease the burden on businesses, and provide support. The Community Development Coordinator continues to correspond with business owners on a regular basis regarding Provincial, County, and local funding opportunities and assisting as required.

The Bruce County Economic Task Force has completed their mandate and the CAO's participation has now ended. This group completed a number of very timely action items that supported the business community across Bruce County with various funding programs established and initiated expediently. Staff continue to investigate additional ideas and work with the Walkerton BIA to collaborate on local initiatives.

Finance:

Staff continue to review all department's capital projects, identify budgetary impacts, track financial implications and determine if projects should be postponed until 2021 both as a result of COVID-19. Staff continue to discuss recovery planning with the sub-committee. Staff are awaiting further documentation before they can issue the year-end consolidated statements and better evaluate the impact of COVID-19 in comparison.

Residents have been encouraged to continue paying bills through the Municipal Office drop-box, or via Pre-Authorized Payment Withdrawals or Online/Telephone Banking; although staff will accept payment at the office after August 10, 2020.

Fire:

The Open Air Burn Ban originally issued on July 9, 2020 was lifted July 28, 2020. Residents are still reminded to ensure they comply with Brockton's Open Air Burn By-Law 2017-034 as well as all provincial orders.

The Fire Chief and Fire Prevention Officer/Health and Safety Coordinator continue to support the Recovery Sub-Committee.

Firefighters continue to have virtual meetings, training, and conference calls through Zoom. Both Walkerton and Elmwood Fire Stations have begun training in small cohorts of less than five (5) people to resume truck checks and training of new recruits during the summer. The Fire Department plans to resume in-person training in September with physical distancing requirements in place.

Human Resources:

Staff continue to review and revise pandemic policies to ensure their consistency with the changing pandemic. Staff also continues to assist employees in various matters related to COVID-19, and maintain regular communications in a timely manner with a focus on employee wellness.

Staff assisted the Brockton Child Care Centre Supervisor in recalling staff at the Brockton Child Care Centre for the reopening. Matters consistently arise as a result of the COVID-19 environment and planning for return-to-work operational plans.

Operations:

The Greenock Landfill reopened as of Saturday, August 1, 2020 with regular hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Staff appreciate the public's continued cooperation as the Greenock Landfill continues its services. Residents are still encouraged to use curbside pickup whenever possible.

Operations at the Brant Landfill, Walkerton Cemetery, and Water/Wastewater Services continue as normal.

A number of waste management updates were provided in the [June](#) and [July Brockton Buzz Newsletter](#) to inform the public on COVID-19 updates regarding the Walkerton Recycling Depot, landfills, bag tags, and clothing donations. This information will also be included in the August Brockton Buzz Newsletter.

As mentioned in the previous COVID-19 Municipal Response Report, a number of road construction projects have begun involving both municipal and County staff. These road closures and service disruptions continue to be communicated to the public through the municipal website, social media, Brockton Buzz Newsletter, and Council Agendas.

Public Works staff continue to work on projects, vehicle maintenance, and implement capital projects.

Parks and Recreation:

The Walkerton Community Centre remains closed to in-person walk-ins. Residents are asked to phone or email to arrange a future appointment. Department staff and Committees are working to open facilities to the public for September.

Staff met with the volunteers and staff at the Cargill, Elmwood and Bradley Community Centres to develop a reopening plan for all community centre facilities. Staff will continue to assist and develop a robust plan to ensure the safety of all accessing the facilities, and ensure the reopening plan complies with any changes to the Provincial gathering restrictions. At this time, the Community Centres are in favour of reopening in September.

Staff have developed a Ready. Set. Play. Summer Activity Passport which will be launched on the Municipality's community engagement website, www.buildyourbrockton.ca as well as advertised on social media, and in the August Brockton Buzz Newsletter. Ready. Set. Play. is a self-directed weekly activity passport for community youth that promotes healthy living and activity. All activities can be completed from the comfort of residents' own home, or by visiting Brockton parks. Week one (1) begins on August 10, 2020.

Staff have met with local hockey organizations and user groups to conducting research related to hockey protocols for consideration and review. Staff are also assisting user groups in establishing Return-to-Play plans. User groups will be distributing surveys to members of their organizations to collect feedback to assist with planning.

Lobies Campground reservations are booked for the summer, and many residents are accessing the Walkerton Kinsmen Splash Pad.

Inquiries for facility and event bookings or Lobies Campground reservations continue to be made by calling the Parks and Recreation Office or emailing recreation@brockton.ca.

Staff continue to inspect municipal parks, properties, and facilities on a regular basis. Residents with concerns of damage, vandalism, or mischief occurring in Brockton's recreational facilities or amenities are still encouraged to notify the Parks and Recreation Department, or the O.P.P. if they witness damage, vandalism, or mischief while occurring.

Internal Communications:

The County CAO's arranged a webinar for Municipal Staff which was held on July 30, 2020, hosted by the Medical Officer of Health to learn about the return to work process and questions related to COVID with neighbouring Bruce County municipalities. Another webinar is scheduled for August 11, 2020.

Regular internal communications remain a priority to ensure all staff are aware of changes as they occur. The health and safety of staff is a priority for the Municipality. Staff have been reminded about the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance throughout the stressors of the pandemic, and have been encouraged to utilize resources available on the Employee Family Assistance Program and take holidays as booked to ensure employee well-being.

The CAO has conducted several Zoom meetings with all staff providing updates on the Municipal response to the pandemic, answer inquiries, relay information personally, and thank staff for their continued work in serving the community during this difficult time.

Staff provide an update to all staff through Zoom following Council Meetings to keep everyone informed on decisions passed. Staff have also resumed Health and Safety tailgate meetings through Zoom meetings.

Staff are requesting Council's ratification of the operational decisions that have been established in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sustainability Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Sustainable Strategic Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

- Do the recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision? Yes
- Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Cultural Vibrancy? Yes
- Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Prosperity? Yes
- Do the recommendations contribute to Environmental Integrity? Yes
- Do the recommendations contribute to the Social Equity? Yes

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective? Yes

Staff continue to review the financial implications regarding the continued impact COVID-19 has had on the Municipality. Several COVID-19 financial impact reports have been presented to Council in the past few months, and have all been shared on the Municipality's [COVID-19 Updates webpage](#).

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:



Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer