

Report to Council

Report Title: COVID-19 Municipal Response – September 22, 2020 Update

Prepared By: Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

Department: Clerk's

Date: September 22, 2020

Report Number: CLK2020-30 **File Number:** C11CL, P03CO

Attachments: Information Bulletin – September 2, 2020

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CLK2020-30 – COVID-19 Municipal Response – September 22, 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 for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Report:

Background:

Staff have brought forward seven (7) COVID-19 Municipal Response Reports during the months of March, April, May, June, July, and August explaining the departmental responses and decisions taken by the Municipality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health extended the Order requiring the mandatory use of face coverings in public places in Grey Bruce effective September 11, 2020 for another four (4) weeks.

As noted in the August 11, 2020 COVID-19 Response Report CLK2020-24, the Provincial Emergency Declaration has since expired; and lower-tier municipalities continue to coordinate with the County of Bruce on when to declare the local State of Emergencies to be over.

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-seven (27) times, and have another virtual meeting scheduled for September 29, 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 fourteen (14) Information Bulletins have been distributed (the [most recent](#) issued September 2nd), 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 has provided 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 1,367 views on YouTube and 21,413 views on Facebook.

Staff have also broadcasted thirteen (13) 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, August, and September are all available on YouTube and have received a combined total of 1,219 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 regular basis. Ms. Watson reviewed Business Continuity Plans with Department Heads and 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 on re-opening protocols and to work with staff to ensure key projects move forward.

The Municipal Office reopened to the public August 10, 2020 with additional restrictions in place such as limiting the number of people in the office at one time, and the installation of physical barriers and signage to support the health and safety of both staff and the public. Residents are still required to wear a face covering in accordance with the Grey Bruce Health Unit mandatory face covering order, and use hand sanitizer when entering and exiting the Municipal Office. Residents are still encouraged to continue to limit unnecessary contact by making electronic payments, using the drop box at the Municipal Office and sending inquiries through email. All staff returned to working at the Municipal Office as of September 8, 2020 with health and safety measures in place to protect staff.

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. Staff will continue to adapt and discuss pandemic plans in case a second wave of the virus occurs.

Brockton Child Care Centre:

The Brockton Child Care Centre continues to care for children since the Centre re-opened on July 6, 2020. Staff are also offering before and after school programs. Staff are scheduling outdoor breaks within the school to ensure physical distancing is maintained since the playground at the Centre is being renovated.

In accordance with direction from the Grey Bruce Health Unit and Ministry of Health, staff must ask children with one (1) symptom to either leave or not attend the centre with a recommendation to contact their health care professional for a COVID-19 test. Staff must further complete Serious Occurrence Paperwork for the Ministry, and track the children who are asked to leave the Centre.

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 MCEG meetings. Staff plan to issue additional communication to remind the public to be vigilant and continue to wash their hands, wear a face covering, and practice physical distancing. 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. Council decided to continue broadcasting meetings using Zoom Video Conferencing for the remainder of the 2020 calendar year. Staff continue to administer various meetings for Department Heads and organize and monitor all Committees or Local Boards Meetings through Zoom. Council further decided to broadcast Committee/Local Board Meetings through Zoom unless the majority of members have difficulty assessing the technology and the Clerk's department will arrange an in-person meeting in a location that allows for physical distancing. All Committee/Local Board Meetings are posted to the Municipal website's Community Calendar to allow public viewing and ensure accountability and transparency. As previously noted, in-person meetings are not recommended as the norm 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 62 marriage licenses

have been issued to date (58 of those licenses were issued from March 13 to September 18, 2020 during COVID-19). As a comparison, in 2019, a total of 67 licenses were issued from January to September 18 (59 of those licenses were issued from March 13 to September 18, 2019).

Marriage licensing, lottery licensing and commissioning services 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 South Bruce as part of our shared services agreement.

Economic Development:

Staff launched a tourism campaign with the Brockton Visitor Information Centre and Walkerton Business Improvement Area (BIA) promoting Brockton 'staycation' activities for the past four (4) weeks.

Staff continue to support and advocate for Brockton businesses and support their inquiries on a regular basis. Staff will continue to investigate additional ideas and work with the Walkerton BIA to collaborate on local initiatives. Staff will further investigate ways to support businesses throughout the colder months. The lack of patios during the winter will affect local restaurants ability to serve patrons.

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 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. Staff have also begun working on the 2021 Municipal Budget.

Residents are encouraged to continue paying bills through the Municipal Office drop-box, Pre-Authorized Payment Withdrawals, or Online/Telephone Banking, although in-person payments are also being accepted at the Municipal Office.

Fire:

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 will begin mandatory training in-person with physical distancing in September. Each member will be required to attend a requisite number of hours.

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. Human Resources is very busy with recruitment efforts at this time.

Operations:

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

Staff are preparing for Winter Burials at the Municipally-owned cemeteries if the service is required.

Staff also continue to work on capital projects and road constructions. Road closures and service disruptions continue to be communicated to the public through the municipal website, social media, Brockton Buzz Newsletter, and Council Agendas.

Parks and Recreation:

The Walkerton Community Centre ice was installed in the arena and available to user groups on September 8, 2020. Renovations have been completed in the Walkerton Community Centre lobby which included the installation of physical barriers to protect staff and the public. Residents are asked to continue phoning or emailing to arrange appointments. Staff have further communicated the reopening plans and restrictions for ice surface user groups with the organizations. It is imperative that members of the public and organizations follow the restrictions in place in order to keep everyone safe, and limit the spread of the virus.

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 that the reopening plan complies with any changes to the Provincial gathering restrictions.

Both the Elmwood Community Centre Board and Cargill and District Community Fund (CDCF) have planned, or have conducted take-out nights. Elmwood have launched several Wing Nights at the Elmwood Community Centre, and the CDCF are planning a take-out turkey dinner on October 25, 2020 at the Cargill Community Centre. Both Committees/Boards received approval from the Municipality and Grey Bruce Health Unit for their plans.

Staff launched and completed the Ready. Set. Play. Summer Activity Passport Program which occurred for four (4) weeks. A separate Report advertising the statistics is included on the September 22, 2020 Council Agenda for Council's information.

Lobies Campground will close on October 12, 2020 for the season. Inquiries for 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:

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.

The CAO and Clerk 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