

Report to Council

Report Title: COVID-19 Municipal Response - January 12, 2021 Update

Prepared By: Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

Department: Clerk's

Date: January 12, 2021

Report Number: CLK2021-02 **File Number:** C11CL, P03

Attachments: Information Bulletin – December 21, 2020

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CLK2021-02 - COVID-19 Municipal Response – January 12, 2021 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 ten (10) COVID-19 Municipal Response Reports during the months of March, April, May, June, July, August, September, November, and December explaining the departmental responses and decisions taken by the Municipality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Provincial Government developed a COVID-19 Response Framework dividing Health Unit regions into coloured categories: Green (Prevent), Yellow (Protect), Orange (Restrict), Red (Control), and Grey (Lockdown). Each level contains specific information on restrictions, public health measures, and safety measures that must be adhered to.

On December 21, 2020 the Provincial Government moved the entire Province of Ontario into [lockdown](#) effective December 26, 2020 at 12:01 a.m. for a period of 14 days for Northern Ontario, and 28 days for Southern Ontario. Due to the lockdown, the colour coded COVID-19 Response Framework is paused.

The Province also established a vaccine task force and have begun distribution based on its ethical framework plan. The Grey Bruce Health Unit has submitted a proposal to the Provincial Government which would provide the Provincial Government with a successful pilot of a Pfizer logistic hub for vaccine delivery in small-urban and rural communities. The proposal capitalizes on the optimal readiness and collaboration among Grey Bruce Health Unit, Grey and Bruce municipalities, three hospital systems and health care partners, and community

partners including Bruce Power and Chapman's Ice Cream. Full details on the [vaccine roll-out proposal](#) can be read in the [Health Unit's Media Release](#).

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 thirty-four (34) times, and have bi-weekly meetings scheduled into 2021. The MECG met on December 21, 2020 following the Provincial lockdown announcement, and most recently met on January 5, 2021. 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.

Staff continue to spread awareness on the importance of following COVID-19 protocol, advice from the Grey Bruce Health Unit, and the Provincial Government through social media and the Municipality's [COVID-19 Updates webpage](#). Additional visual/graphic communications have been launched on the Municipality's social media accounts on a regular basis, including scheduled posts over the Christmas holidays. Communications will continue to be posted to keep residents informed.

On December 11, 2020 Mayor Peabody and Sparky the Fire Dog filmed a video focusing on the 3 W's: Watch your distance; Wear a mask; and Wash your hands. The video was geared toward a younger audience but provided a good reminder for all residents. The video was viewed a total of 1,000 times on Facebook, and 15 times on YouTube.

Mayor Peabody had also recorded a radio advertisement reminding the community to be safe over the holiday break.

On December 21, 2020, a new [Information Bulletin](#) was issued regarding the Province-wide lockdown, and the Municipality's response, including office and facility closures, and updated information on service distribution. These decisions are also summarized in the Departmental Responses portion of this report.

A new COVID-19 Update from Mayor Peabody was also published on December 21, 2020 regarding the lockdown announcement. The video was viewed a total of 1,200 times on Facebook.

On December 27, 2020, a Mayor's Message video summarizing the highlights that occurred in Brockton over the year. The video was viewed a total of 510 times on Facebook.

Staff broadcasted twenty-three (23) Council, Court of Revision, and Committee of Adjustment Meetings in 2020 through Zoom Video Conferencing and livestreamed the meetings to YouTube. The full recordings of the 2020 Council, Court of Revision, and Committee of Adjustment Meetings held in April, May, June, and July, August, September, October, November, and December are all available on YouTube and have received a

combined total of 2,093 views - Each meeting averages approximately 100 views. Staff will continue to broadcast the Council Meetings throughout 2021. Staff have prepared an additional Report to Council regarding the broadcasting of Council Meetings in order to decide how to continue this service throughout the entirety of 2021.

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 Grey Health Center, South Bruce O.P.P., and the County of Bruce on regular basis.

Enforcement matters continue to be dealt with by the Municipality's By-Law Enforcement Officer and Fire Prevention Officer. The By-Law Enforcement Officer increased their presence in December to monitor and encourage compliance with COVID-19 protocol and restrictions within the community. This positive approach to public education will continue into 2021 as scheduling and weather permits.

The CAO continues to meet regularly with Department Heads and staff to revise re-opening protocols, staffing plans, and additional measures that need to be taken to ensure safety, especially in light of the new lockdown. The Municipal Office remains closed to the public until January 25, 2021; and during this time the majority of staff are working remotely, or are on alternating shifts to ensure everyone's health and safety. Services are still being offered through phone, email, electronic billing payments, or being offered by appointment.

The Walkerton Business Improvement Area Office is closed to the public until January 25, 2021 but businesses can book appointments to speak to the Manager.

Brockton Child Care Centre:

The Child Care Centre expansion opening ceremonies were held on December 4, 2020 and the new rooms and playground are open. The Centre is open to the public once again, and staff are busy caring for the children. Staff continue to monitor children's symptoms in compliance with direction from the Grey Bruce Health Unit and Ministry of Education.

The Child Care Centre had also offered services for school age programs for emergency personnel based on guidelines from the Province and County of Bruce; however, due to the strict criteria and lack of interest, the program is not required at this time. They continue to adapt to each change the Province announces related to school closure which affects staffing levels and children attending.

The Centre is also finalizing recruitment to fill a vacancy for the cook position.

Building:

The Building Department continues to process building permits, and have received additional inquiries over the Christmas holidays. Residents are encouraged to continue submitting or applying for permits via email to the Building and Planning Manager/CBO and Building Inspector. Staff continue to support developers plans and are meeting by zoom regularly to get projects planned and off the ground in 2021.

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 and will continue to be distributed on Municipality's [COVID-19 Updates webpage](#) to keep the public informed.

As mentioned previously, communications were increased on social media to remind residents through the use of visual graphics to follow COVID-19 protocol, especially since the increased number of COVID-19 cases in Grey and Bruce. Staff distributed communications over the Christmas break, and published an [Information Bulletin](#) on December 21, 2020 regarding the lockdown announcement. Staff will continue to communicate over the next month, and adjust as needed based on the Provincial lockdown, and direction from the Health Unit.

Staff have prepared a separate Report to Council on the January 12, 2021 Council Agenda regarding broadcasting Council meetings to obtain direction on how Council wishes to proceed with the service throughout 2021.

Staff continue to administer various Department Head meetings and Committee/Local Board Meetings through Zoom. Committee and/or Local Board Meetings will also continue electronically through Zoom until further notice. Alternate arrangements are also considered if the majority of members have difficulty assessing the technology. In that case, the Clerk's Department arranges 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.

Marriage and lottery licensing services continue to be offered by appointment since the Municipal Office is closed to the public. Commissioning services are suspended at this time. The Clerk's Department ensures that couples and officiants follow Provincial guidelines for wedding ceremonies booked during 2021.

The contract By-Law Enforcement Officer continues to respond to enforcement calls, and provided additional education and reminders of COVID-19 protocol throughout December, and will continue to do so as scheduling and weather permits.

Economic Development:

Staff continue to support and advocate for Brockton businesses and support their inquiries on a regular basis, including working with the Walkerton BIA to collaborate on local initiatives.

Staff continue to promote available grant and loan opportunities to businesses, and are contacting the Provincial Government regarding the Ontario Small Business Support Grant for additional information about the launch, and ways to support Brockton businesses. Contact information is posted regularly on the Community Development Coordinator's ability to assist residents by phone, email or appointment.

Several Business Newsletters were distributed during December 2020, and will continue to be published this year. Some economic development highlights were also included in the 2020 Year-End Mayor's Message video.

The Community Development Coordinator attended the Walkerton BIA Annual General Meeting on January 6, 2021 to collaborate with Board members, and hear feedback from business owners on the BIA's strategic plans and goals for the new year.

Finance:

Staff will continue to review all departments capital projects, budgetary impacts, track financial implications, and monitor capital projects that may need to be revised as a result of COVID-19.

Staff are finalizing the 2021 Municipal Budget, and have been monitoring the feedback received on the [2021 Budget Survey](#) in preparation for the 2021 Budget Meetings. The January 19 and 20, 2021 Budget Meetings will now be held electronically through Zoom and be livestreamed to YouTube. A separate Report to Council is included on the January 12, 2021 Council Agenda which includes initial feedback on the [Budget Consultation 2021 Project](#) on [Build Your Brockton](#).

Residents can continue to pay bills through Pre-Authorized Payment Withdrawals, or Online/Telephone Banking.

Staff also assisted with IT matters to ensure efficiently while the majority of staff are working remotely due to the lockdown.

Fire:

The Fire Hall is closed to outside groups/renters and only available for municipal staff, or firefighter use. Firefighters are holding virtual training sessions again due to the lockdown.

The Director of Fire and Emergency Services is reviewing COVID-19 Safety Plans for all departments.

Human Resources:

The Human Resources Department distributed communications on employee wellness, mental health tools, staff supports, especially during the holiday season and throughout January to mitigate the impact of COVID fatigue. Webinars will also be shared with staff in 2021.

Operations:

As a result of the lockdown, the Greenock Landfill is temporarily closed until further notice, and staff have been transferred to the Brant Landfill. Greenock residents are able to attend the Brant Landfill during this time. All residents are encouraged to take advantage of curbside collection. Additional signage was installed at the landfills to remind patrons to wear a face covering, and physically distance while attending the sites. A vehicle limit of 10 vehicles remains at the Brant Landfill. In December 2020, the By-Law Enforcement Officer also assisted also assist in reminding patrons to obey COVID restrictions.

Household garbage and recycling pickup continues as scheduled unless otherwise advised. The Walkerton Recycling Depot is also temporarily closed; however, residents can still drop off corrugated cardboard and Styrofoam to the depot.

Staff prepared for winter burials at the Cemetery, and encourage residents to call the Municipal Office with any cemetery inquiries.

Staff have also been clearing sidewalks on a more frequent basis to assist downtown businesses in Walkerton with curbside pickup, and provide support to our local economy.

Parks and Recreation:

The Recreation Office at the Walkerton Community Centre is closed to the public until further notice, with the exception of drop-offs for well water samples. Well-water samples can be dropped off at the Walkerton Community Centre between the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 1:40 p.m. Monday to Friday. Recreation Department inquiries can still be made by phone or email.

All facility rentals, recreational and leisure programs, including private bookings have been postponed until further notice. The Elmwood Community Centre, Cargill and District Community Centre and Bradley School House Community Centre are closed to the public until further notice.

Staff have begun prepping the outdoor skating trail at Lobies Park. The skating trail will be opened to the public (hours and dates to be determined), weather permitting, with users limited to ten (10) individuals with appropriate physical distancing and in place and staff supervision. A new kiosk is also being installed at Lobies Park to allow for increased physical distancing and maintaining the health and safety of patrons and staff.

All other Parks, Trails, Open Spaces and Amenities remain open except those seasonally closed, where individuals must maintain a physical distance of least two metres apart from others and social gatherings are not to exceed 10 persons.

Staff have begun refreshing and updating signage at Municipal facilities and parks, including COVID signage that has weathered over the past few months.

The ice has been kept in at the Arena to allow for a smooth transition if programming were able to resume. Staff monitor the Arena ice plant daily, and complete snow removal and sidewalk cleaning at the entry and exits of all buildings. Only full-time staff are working during the lockdown period and are conducting maintenance and updates throughout facilities.

The Programming Coordinator is in training and drafting plans for recreational programs that will be offered to small groups following the completion of the lockdown and preparing for summer programs and staffing.

The Bruce County libraries are closed to the public with curbside pickup available.

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 continue to be 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 schedule holidays to ensure employee well-being.

The CAO conducted several Zoom meetings with all staff in 2020. The CAO works with staff to ensure updates on the Municipal response to the pandemic, answering inquiries, relay information personally, and thank staff for their continued work in serving the community during this difficult time.

As conducted previously, the CAO and Clerk will continue to provide updates to all staff through Zoom following Council Meetings to keep everyone informed on decisions passed. Staff continue to hold Health and Safety tailgate meetings through Zoom meetings.

During the lockdown, the majority of staff are working remotely, or on alternating shifts to maintain municipal services. Our focus remains on ensuring employee wellness, especially as we navigate this additional lockdown and the added pressures it can cause families with children in school at home.

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. COVID-19 financial impact reports were presented to Council in 2020, and will continue throughout this new year. The reports are all uploaded to the Municipality's [COVID-19 Updates webpage](#).

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:



Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

Reviewed By:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sonya Watson", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer