

Report to Council

Report Title: COVID-19 Municipal Response – March 9, 2021 Update

Prepared By: Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

Department: Clerk's

Date: March 9, 2021

Report Number: CLK2021-08 **File Number:** C11, P03

Attachments: Information Bulletin – February 16, 2021

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CLK2021-08 - COVID-19 Municipal Response – March 9, 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 12 COVID-19 Municipal Response Reports during the months of March to December 2020, January, and February 2021 explaining the departmental responses and decisions taken by the Municipality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Effective February 16, 2021 at 12:01 a.m. the Grey Bruce Health Unit was moved into the Yellow “Protect” Level as part of the Provincial COVID-19 Response Framework. As result, the Municipality issued a new [Information Bulletin](#) on February 16, 2021 including reopening plans. On March 1, 2021 the Grey Bruce Health Unit was further moved into the Green “Prevent” Level. The Province continues to encourage residents to stay home as much as possible, and continue to follow health and safety protocols.

The Province and Grey Bruce Health Unit continue vaccine distribution, and re-evaluate distribution plans as a result of available vaccine supply. The Municipality continues to receive updates on the local vaccination plan through the Grey Bruce Health Unit's Vaccine Task Force, and will assist in communications and providing support as the Plan is implemented. On February 25, 2021, the Grey Bruce Health Unit issued a [Media Release](#), noting that persons 80 years of age and older are currently being identified through the health care system for eligibility for the COVID 19 vaccine, and that all eligible persons will be contacted directly in the near future to schedule the vaccines. This specific Media Release and related vaccine communication has been updated by the Health Unit to continue informing residents of how vaccine appointments will occur. The Health Unit also

includes the total number of vaccinations administered on their [Vaccines webpage](#), and in their Situation Reports listing the number of COVID-19 cases. To date, over 8,300 vaccines have been administered in Grey Bruce. Bruce Power and the Grey Bruce Health Unit are also hosting a webinar on March 10, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. to provide an update on the COVID-19 Vaccine, discuss the plan for Grey Bruce immunization, and answer questions from residents. Registration for the webinar is available on [Bruce Power's website](#).

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 37 times, most recently on February 16, 2021, and have another meeting scheduled for March 9, 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.

On February 16, 2021, a new [Information Bulletin](#) was issued including the Municipality's reopening plans. As of February 22, 2021 the Municipality resumed in-person services, and encourage residents to continue limiting in-person contact as much as possible to maintain the health and safety of everyone.

No new COVID-19 Update Videos have been filmed since January 27, 2021.

Staff continue to broadcast Council, Court of Revision, and Committee of Adjustment Meetings through Zoom Video Conferencing and livestream the meetings to YouTube. To date 31 meetings have been broadcast (including the 2020 Meetings). The full recordings of the 2020 meetings, and the January, February, and March 2, 2021 Council Meetings are all available on YouTube. To date the 2021 meetings have received a combined total of 486 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 Grey Health Centre, 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's positive approach to COVID-19 public education continues as scheduling and weather permits.

Ms. Watson continues to meet regularly with Department Heads and staff to revise any protocols, plans and additional measures that need to be taken to ensure safety. The Municipal Office resumed in-person services as of February 22, 2021, although a small number of staff remain on alternating shifts (working one full week in the office, and the next full week remotely from home to limit numbers in the office space) to ensure everyone's health and safety and business continuity.

The CAO and staff continue to provide information to the vaccination task force as requested to support vaccine roll out locally.

Brockton Child Care Centre:

The Child Care Centre remains open to the public, and staff continue to monitor children's symptoms while dealing with many changes related to the screening measures over the past two weeks. Staff ensure protocols comply with direction from the Grey Bruce Health Unit and Ministry of Education, and monitor any COVID-19 cases that may affect the Centre's operations for before and after school programs.

Building and By-Law Enforcement:

The Building Department continues to process building permits, and are back to normal operations. Staff continue to support developers plans and a core staff group are meeting by Zoom regularly to get projects planned and off the ground.

The contract By-Law Enforcement Officer continues to respond to enforcement calls, and provides additional education and reminders of COVID-19 protocol as scheduling and weather permits.

Clerk's:

The Clerk's department continues to process and distribute all communication from the Municipality, and minute all MCEG 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 continue on social media to remind residents through the use of visual graphics to follow COVID-19 protocol. Staff published a new [Information Bulletin](#) on February 16, 2021. Staff continue to encourage residents to remain vigilant, and practice the 3 W's, and adjust communications as needed based on Provincial announcements, and direction from the Health Unit. Staff continue to monitor legislation for any additional changes to Orders.

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, lottery licensing, and commissioning services continue to be offered by appointment. The Clerk's Department ensures that couples and officiants follow Provincial guidelines for wedding ceremonies booked during 2021.

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 publish Business Newsletters, and support the business community in their reopening, and/or altered service delivery, as well as promoting grant/loan opportunities. Contact information is posted regularly on the Community Development Coordinator's ability to assist residents by phone, email or appointment. Programs to assist the business community further are under consideration and will be reviewed as part of the Community Improvement Plan process.

Finance:

Staff 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.

The 2021 Municipal Budget was approved by Brockton Council on February 9, 2021, and a [Press Release](#) was issued that afternoon.

Residents can continue to pay bills through Pre-Authorized Payment Withdrawals, or Online/Telephone Banking, although in-person services have resumed.

Staff also assist 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 continue to split in-person training in half to limit the number of individuals present at one time.

The Director of Fire and Emergency Services continues to communicate with the Grey Bruce Health Unit and Emergency Management representatives regarding vaccination distribution. A vaccination hub was established at the Walkerton Fire Hall under the direction of the Grey Bruce Health Unit for Friday, March 5, 2021 to serve staff from area Fire Departments, OPP, EMS etc. as directed by the Health Unit.

Human Resources:

The Human Resources Department distributes communications and webinars on employee wellness, mental health tools, and staff supports. The Human Resources Generalist also promoted a Weekly Positivity Contest with various questions inviting staff to share positive outcomes that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic which ran for four weeks in February and received a very positive response.

Operations:

Public works, water and wastewater operations continue as usual, and staff have been busy with winter operations due to the recent increased snowfalls.

The Greenock Landfill continues to be closed until March 20, 2021, and residents are able to attend the Brant Landfill during the remainder of the temporary closure. Physical distancing, face coverings, and the vehicle limit of 10 vehicles at a time remain in effect at the Brant Landfill. All residents are encouraged to take advantage of curbside collection.

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

Parks and Recreation:

The Recreation Office at the Walkerton Community Centre reopened to the public on February 22, 2021, though in-person inquiries are offered by appointment only. Drop-in use of facilities is prohibited at this time, with the exception of well water sample drop-offs.

A Safe Re-Opening Plan has been approved by the Health Unit for certain programming. The Cargill Community Centre is re-opening to offer pickleball programming. The Bradley School House and Elmwood Community Centres remain closed at this time, and recreational programming, facility and event bookings, including hall rentals are also postponed at this time. Staff are meeting with members of the Elmwood and Cargill Community Centres to discuss further reopening plans.

The Programming Coordinator is also drafting monthly and virtual programming plans, and March Break programs which will all be monitored/re-evaluated due to the COVID-19 conditions or changes in restrictions.

On February 9, 2021 Brockton Council approved keeping the ice at the Walkerton Community Centre in until April 1, 2021. On February 20, 2021, the Walkerton Community Centre welcomed back ice users (including Quick Feet Hockey for Grey Bruce residents only). All ice rentals must be booked in advance. Public skating will also be offered Monday to Friday from 12:00 Noon to 1:00 p.m. and on Wednesdays from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Residents wishing to skate must pre-register with Brockton Parks and Recreation by phone at 519-881-0625. No more than 15 skaters can be on the ice at one time, and each resident must complete a COVID-19 Screening Survey prior to entering the ice.

The Lobies Park Skating Oval received extensive interest and use, proving to be a successful asset over the past few months. Effective March 1, 2021, the Oval was closed for the season due to the warmer weather conditions.

Staff promoted a Snow Sculpture Challenge for residents to participate in during the month of February, which received community interest, and produced talented sculptures. Photos were advertised on the Municipality's Facebook page after the contest concluded.

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 Chief Administrative Officer continues to work 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.

The CAO and Clerk 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.

The majority of staff are back in the office full time, with the exception of a few staff members who continue on alternating shifts (working one full week in the office, and the next full week remotely from home). Our focus remains on ensuring employee wellness, especially as we navigate the next stage of the pandemic.

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 will continue. The past 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:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer