

Report to Council

Report Title: COVID-19 Municipal Response - April 13, 2021 Update

Prepared By: Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

Department: Clerk's

Date: April 13, 2021

Report Number: CLK2021-11 **File Number:** C11CL, P03

Attachments: Information Bulletin – April 1, 2021

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CLK2021-11 - COVID-19 Municipal Response – April 13, 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 13 COVID-19 Municipal Response Reports during the months of March to December 2020, January to March 2021 explaining the departmental responses and decisions taken by the Municipality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Effective April 3, 2021 at 12:01 a.m. the entire Province of Ontario was placed in an [Emergency Brake Shutdown](#) for at least four (4) weeks, and the colour-coded COVID-19 Response Framework was paused. As result, the Municipality issued a new [Information Bulletin](#) on April 1, 2021 including facility and program closures. The Province continues to encourage residents to stay home as much as possible, and continue to follow health and safety protocols.

On April 7, 2021 the Province declared a third [provincial emergency](#) under Section 7.0.1 (1) of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*. These measures are being taken in response to the rapid increase in COVID-19 transmission, the threat on the province's hospital system capacity, and the increasing risks posed to the public by COVID-19 variants. Effective April 8, 2021 at 12:01 a.m., the government issued a province-wide [Stay-at-Home Order](#) requiring everyone to remain at home except for essential purposes, such as going to the grocery store or pharmacy, accessing health care services (including getting vaccinated), for outdoor exercise , or for work that cannot be done remotely.

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 assist in communications and providing support through implementation. The Health Unit continues to distribute communications on the vaccine roll-out plan, including the age groups of those eligible to [book appointments](#) to receive the vaccine. The Health Unit further 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 36,028 vaccines have been administered in Grey Bruce. On April 8, 2021 the Grey Bruce Health Unit issued a [Media Release](#) describing the progress made in Grey Bruce during the first phase of vaccination distribution, as well as a second [Media Release](#) stating that Grey Bruce Set a Record for Canada's Largest Ever COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic, noting that 3,498 vaccines were administered at the P&H Center (Hockey Hub) in Hanover on April 7, 2021 which is the largest volume single-day mass immunization event in Canada.

On April 1, 2021 Dr. Ian Arra provided a virtual COVID-19 Update from the Grey Bruce Health Unit to inform the public on vaccines, limiting the impact of the third wave, and managing risks this Spring. The [recording](#) from the virtual event is available to view on the Health Unit's YouTube Channel.

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 39 times, most recently on March 31, 2021, and have another meeting scheduled for April 13, 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. Communications were further shared informing residents of the Province-wide Emergency Brake Shutdown and Stay at Home Order, and reminders to follow public health guidelines, including limiting interactions with those outside their immediate household for Easter.

On April 1, 2021, a new [Information Bulletin](#) was issued including facility closures, and program cancellations or changes as a result of the Emergency Brake Shutdown. The Municipal Office and Recreation Office are both closed to the public from Monday, April 5, 2021 until further notice. Residents are encouraged to contact staff by email or phone for inquiries, and appointments can be made for certain services. Additional measures are included in the Departmental Responses of this report.

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 35 meetings have been broadcast (including the 2020 Meetings). The full recordings of the 2020 meetings, and the January, February, and March 2021 Council Meetings are all available on YouTube. To date the 2021 meetings have received a combined total of 719 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.

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. Due to the office closures, a small number of staff continue working physically in the office, while the remainder of staff work remotely from home, with the ability to come into the office with their Supervisor's approval to maintain everyone's health and safety.

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

The Walkerton Business Improvement Area is closed to the public until further notice, but available to member businesses by appointment only.

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 screening measures. 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 developer's plans and a core staff group are meeting weekly by Zoom to advance the numerous multi-residential development projects on the go in Brockton.

Residents wishing to obtain building permits can drop off documentation at the Municipal Office Drop-Off Box or, preferably, via email, and can direct all inquiries via email or telephone to Building Department staff.

The Building Department also responds to all By-Law Enforcement calls at this time which has added to the workload.

Clerk's:

The Clerk's department continues to process and distribute all communication from the Municipality, and minute all MEOG 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 April 1, 2021. Staff continue to encourage residents to remain vigilant, practice the 3 W's, and limit close contact to their immediate household. Staff adjust communications as needed based on Provincial announcements, and direction from the Health Unit, and continue to monitor legislation for any additional changes to Orders.

Staff continue to administer various Department Head meetings, Council, 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 are offered by appointment, as are Commissioner of Oath services. 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, 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.

Applus+ graciously donated cloth masks to the Municipal Office and Walkerton BIA for businesses and residents throughout the month of March.

Work on the Economic Strategic Action Plan and Community Improvement Plan is ongoing during the lockdown.

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 Province will be offering additional funds to the Municipality to assist with COVID financial restrictions, and any unused funds will be distributed into a 2022 Reserve Fund.

Staff are also working with MPAC to start assessments for new construction quicker.

During the office closure, residents can drop off payment by cheque or cash to the Municipal Office Drop-Off Box, through Pre-Authorized Payment Withdrawals, or Online/Telephone Banking.

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 Fire Department have also sourced ASTM Level 2 masks for all Departments which have been distributed, and implemented and an amended Face Covering Policy since the ASTM Level 2 masks must be worn for staff working within two (2) metres of each other.

The Director of Fire and Emergency Services continues to communicate with the Grey Bruce Health Unit and Emergency Management representatives regarding vaccination distribution.

Human Resources:

The Human Resources Department distributes communications and webinars on employee wellness, mental health tools, and staff supports.

The Human Resources Generalist has assisted the Recreation Department in recruitment efforts over the past month to fill summer positions.

Operations:

The Greenock Landfill reopened on March 20, 2021; however due to the Emergency Brake Shutdown, the Greenock Landfill was closed again until further notice to accommodate health and safety of patrons and staff. Greenock Landfill staff have been transferred to the Brant Landfill to maintain landfill service in rural areas. Residents can attend the Brant Landfill during 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.

Household garbage and recycling pickup will continue as scheduled unless otherwise advised. The Walkerton Recycling Depot (MTO Yard) is closed to the public, however, cardboard recycling and styrofoam drop-off are still available.

Staff encourage residents to call the Municipal Office with any cemetery inquiries.

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 8:30-1:40 p.m. Monday to Friday. Recreation Department inquiries can still be made by telephone 519-881-0625 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 had began plans to offer additional programming, including at the Elmwood and Cargill Community Centres which have been halted due to the Emergency Brake Shutdown at Stay at Home Order.

Camp in a Box Program materials were picked up at the Walkerton Community Centre on April 8, 2021 between 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Residents had to park in designated parking spots, and Recreation staff brought Camp in a Box materials to vehicles.

All other Parks, Trails, Open Spaces and Amenities remain open except for those seasonally closed. Individuals must maintain a physical distance of least two metres apart and groups are not to too exceed 5 persons in accordance with the restrictions set by the Province of Ontario. Staff have also begun placing additional garbage disposals at the parks, and are currently planning to install portable toilets at the parks and trails as was completed last year during the Spring/Summer months.

The department has been busy planning for summer operations with recruitment and programming for summer camp and pool programs.

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 working remotely, with the ability to come into the office as needed with approval, and a small number of staff work physically in the office. 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?

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| • 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