

Report to Council

Report Title: COVID-19 Municipal Response - May 11, 2021 Update

Prepared By: Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

Department: Clerk's

Date: May 11, 2021

Report Number: CLK2021-15 **File Number:** C11CL, P03

Attachments: Information Bulletin – April 22, 2021

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CLK2021-15 - COVID-19 Municipal Response - May 11, 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 14 COVID-19 Municipal Response Reports during the months of March to December 2020, January to April 2021 explaining the departmental responses and decisions taken by the Municipality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Provincial [Emergency Brake Shutdown](#) expired on May 1, 2021; however the Orders under the Emergency orders under both the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* and the *Reopening Ontario Act* remain in effect.

On April 16, 2021 the Province extended the third provincial emergency and the Stay-at-Home Order for an additional two (2) weeks, (until at least May 19, 2021), while imposing new travel restrictions and further strengthening public health measures. These urgent actions targeted the rapid growth of COVID-19 case rates and aimed at relieving pressures on the Province's health care system.

As result, the Municipality issued a new [Information Bulletin](#) on April 22, 2021 clarifying the Provincial extensions of the Stay at Home Order and Provincial Declaration of Emergency, including the impact on recreational amenities and enforcement of orders. The Province continues to encourage residents to stay home as much as possible, work remotely 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 assist in communications and providing support and education throughout the 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 63,061 vaccines have been administered in Grey Bruce.

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 43 times, most recently on April 27, 2021, and have another meeting scheduled for May 11, 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 continue to be launched on the Municipality's social media accounts on a regular basis. Communications were further shared informing residents of the extension of the Provincial Declaration of Emergency and Stay at Home Order, including associated impacts to Municipal services such as recreation.

The MECG has further met to discuss new communications that can be shared on social media and the Municipality's Community Engagement Website, Build Your Brockton, to encourage a positive atmosphere and provide support to residents and businesses as a result of COVID-19 fatigue. Staff have launched a [Coping With COVID project](#) inquiring on ways residents have been coping with the pandemic, as well as a map to pin residents' favourite places in Brockton they have enjoyed while spending more time at home such as restaurants or trails, and a forum to interact with fellow community members. Staff have also launched a [Be Active Brockton project](#) featuring recreation activities that residents can participate in at-home, which will be updated monthly with new family activities, games or exercise routines by the Recreation Programmer.

Staff have also begun to advertise a "Keep Calm" social media campaign recognizing local businesses, and encouraging residents to shop local using online or curbside pickup to support Brockton's economy. Staff also plan on sharing communications on local outdoor activities in Brockton that residents can access while obeying public health measures once the Stay at Home Order is lifted.

On April 22, 2021 the Municipality issued a new [Information Bulletin](#) clarifying the Provincial extensions of the Stay at Home Order and Provincial Declaration of Emergency, including the impact on recreational amenities and enforcement of orders. The Municipal Office and Recreation Office continue to remain closed 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 39 meetings have been broadcast (including the 2020 Meetings). The full recordings of the 2020 meetings, and the January to April 2021 Council Meetings are all available on YouTube. To date the 2021 meetings have received a combined total of 898 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 and to encourage uptake within our work groups and the community.

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. Currently, the Centre is operating programming for emergency workers as per the County of Bruce and Provincial Government guidelines.

On April 15th and 16th when Dr. Arra announced an immediate and necessary Stay At Home request in an effort to handle the number of close COVID contacts and minimize further exposure to COVID-19 throughout the community the MECG approved a one-time offer to families due to the emergency situation. An offer was extended to the Brockton Child Care families to allow them to keep their children at home for the two days at no charge to seek abidance to the Health unit request. This still allowed Child Care Services to continue as needed by essential workers but allowed and encouraged compliance by able families. Approximately ¾ of the centre families took advantage of this offer. This was only extended due to the local immediate concern in an

effort to mitigate risk to our teachers and families and support Dr. Arra's request. The Childcare Centre remains a very safe space with Ministry of Education and Grey Bruce Health Unit protocols in place. Regular meetings are held with the Grey Bruce Health Unit staff and child care operators for ongoing measures.

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 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, and new projects were launched on Build Your Brockton to encourage a more positive approach to the pandemic. Staff published a new [Information Bulletin](#) on April 22, 2021. Staff continue to 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, lottery licensing, and Commissioner of Oath services are all 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, as well as promoting grant/loan opportunities. Staff also began a "Keep Calm" campaign encouraging residents to support local businesses by ordering online or through curbside pickup.

The Community Development Coordinator is also working with businesses to update the www.visitwalkerton.com website and further promotion will occur to outline the extended listing of all businesses in one central place.

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.

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. A separate report has been included on the May 11, 2021 Council Agenda on the 2020 Year-End Financial Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff are also working with MPAC to start assessments for new construction in a faster timeline.

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 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. COVID Policies are updated as required and attending to staffing matters related to the COVID pandemic and vaccine eligibility are ongoing.

The Human Resources Generalist continues to assist the Recreation and Brockton Child Care Centre Departments in recruitment efforts.

Operations:

Due to the Provincial Stay at Home Order, the Greenock Landfill remains closed until further notice to accommodate health and safety of patrons and staff. Residents have been attending 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 continues as scheduled unless otherwise advised. The Walkerton Recycling Depot (MTO Yard) remains closed to the public, however, cardboard recycling and styrofoam drop-off are still available.

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

Parks and Recreation:

The Recreation Office at the Walkerton Community Centre continues to be 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 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 begun plans to offer additional programming, including at the Elmwood and Cargill Community Centres which were halted due to the Provincial Stay at Home Order.

The ice at the Walkerton Community Centre has been removed for the season, and staff have transitioned to parks operations, including active inspections as part of annual operations. Staff have prepped equipment and facilities for ongoing work, and refreshed signage at the parks that was either missing or damaged due to weather.

Due to the extended Stay at Home Order, staff are reviewing summer programming plans which may be delayed or further impacted by any future announcements. As mentioned previously, staff have launched a [Be Active Brockton project](#) promoting monthly at-home programs residents can participate in over the next few months.

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 installing portable toilets at the parks and trails as was completed last year during the Spring/Summer months.

The department continues to undergo recruitment for summer staffing positions.

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 office 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 and safety, 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](#).

As previously mentioned, an additional report is on the May 11, 2021 Council Agenda including the 2020 Year-End Financial Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The two-day emergency stay-at-home offer at the Brockton Child Care resulted in approx. \$6,000 in lost revenue.

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sarah Johnson". The script is cursive and fluid.

Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

Reviewed By:

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Sonya Watson". The script is cursive and fluid.

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer