CITY OF PORTSMOUTH

UPDATE from the City Manager for Monday, March 23, 2020

Good news from our virtual reality:
The NH Interscholastic Athletic Association has declared the Portsmouth High School Boys Basketball Team Division 1 State Co-Champions along with Exeter High School. Congratulations, Clippers!

We again thank this community for all of your patience and concern for each other and our neighbors during this extraordinary time.

All municipal buildings and facilities, schools and the Portsmouth Public Library are closed to the public. Services are staffed *Monday through Friday*, according to staggered work schedules to minimize the number of people in the same place at the same time.

- **NEW: Applying for Elderly/Disabled/Solar abatements**? Click here for the latest update on new and renewed applications. http://files.cityofportsmouth.com/files/assessors/2020-Procedure-for-New-Veteran-and-Exemption-Applications1.pdf
- **Paying bills while City Hall is closed to the public.** Residents are asked to use the City's online services to pay their water bills, taxes, fees, fines; secure permits, etc. Payments can be mailed or dropped in the dropbox in the City Hall parking lot.
- **Fire Department** has suspended scheduled fire protection inspections and the issuing of any burn permits. If you have a Class 1 or 2 permit (backyard, etc.) the permit expiration is extended to June 1, 2020.
- **Building Inspections** continue by video for unoccupied and exteriors of buildings.
- **Planning Department**: For information about land use applications and submission deadlines click here - https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/planportsmouth/news/instructions-submitting-land-use-applications-during-covid-19-shut-down
- **All City board, commission and committee meetings have been postponed until further notice**.
- **Portsmouth Public Library:** for details on all of the on-line services offered by the Library and how to access them, click here. https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/library/news/coronavirus

Feeling anxious? there are many people feeling anxieties about the current situation. Kim McNamara, City Health Officer suggested these resources who are there to help:

- **Seacoast Mental Health** has geared up for exactly these challenges call 603-431-6703 or click here. https://smhc-nh.org/covid-19-updates/

- **NEW: SOS Recovery Centers are a good option (**for people in recovery). Click here for SOS: https://straffordrecovery.org/virtual-meetings/ and click here for the recovery center in Portsmouth, Safe Harbor. https://nhrecoveryhub.org/find-help/safe-harbor-recovery-center

A few reminders on how to keep everyone safer:

Don't congregate. Get outside. Enjoy some fresh air. Just keep your distance. Portsmouth's open space parks and trails and the NH State Parks are open, but ballfields, basketball courts and playgrounds are NOT. The locks on the gates are there for the protection of all. That means no group sports, no group gatherings (not even ones you've planned like birthday parties) and especially no contact with older relatives who are the most susceptible population. Remember that you might unknowingly bring COVID-19 back into your house, putting everyone at risk.

Tell first responders if anyone in your household is quarantined due to COVID-19 if you need contact with the Fire Department, Police Department or other emergency services. If they are not wearing personal protective equipment when they are exposed, they must self-quarantine for 14 days. No exceptions. That reduces the force available to respond.

NEW: Remember to wipe down your cellphones when you're sanitizing surfaces. They're in constant use, connecting hands and face.

And advice from a Boston physician:

- Eliminate play dates, even "1 on 1"
- Eliminate small gatherings, including meetings "between a few families."
- Avoid "climbing gyms, restaurants, movie theaters, anything in an enclosed area." "Many of these places are advertising increased cleaning and hygiene. This is not sufficient! Do not go."
- Cancel planned vacations for the next month and avoiding airline travel.
- Stay at home as much as possible. They also advise working from home if possible and when you do have to go out to buy groceries or medicine "make the trips quick and purposeful."
- Wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after you've been in public places.

Back to Single-Use Plastic Bags -- Gov. Chris Sununu on Saturday ordered all grocery and retail stores to temporarily transition to the use of single-use paper or plastic bags only – no reusable customer bags -- due to the threat of the spread of the coronavirus. Customers' use of reusable bags is banned. The governor said the order applies to all supermarkets, grocery, convenience and retail stores and any other similar establishment engaged in the in-store sale of product. The purpose of the order is to avoid the unintentional spread of the virus from home environments. https://www.governor.nh.gov/news-media/press-2020/20200321-emergency-order-10.htm

Update on grocery stores:

- **Latest list of food stores and pharmacy hours**, click here: https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/sites/default/files/2020-03/Food%20Pharmacy%20Delivery%202020.03.23_0.pdf
- Effective Monday, March 23, 2020, **Market Basket stores close at 6 pm**.
- **NEW: Seniors-Only (age 60+) Shopping Hours are available Daily 7-8am at McKinnons** and Tues-Thurs mornings at Market Basket and Hannaford

School Department:

- **Meal distribution as of Monday, March 23**. Pickup for breakfast and lunch at the Portsmouth High School cafeteria door between 7:30 am and 12 noon. Meal distribution takes place as following at the satellite sites:
    - Wamesit (11:00 - 11:25)
    - Ledgewood (11:30 - 11:45)
    - Gosling Recreation Center (11:00-11:45)
    - Osprey Landing (at mailboxes) (11:00-11:20)

    - White Cedars (11:30-11:45)
    - Patriots Park (11:00-11:20)
    - Beechstone (playground) (11:25 - 11:45)
    - Unless indicated otherwise, drop-off locations will be at the typical bus stops in these areas. Our schedule and stops may change as we work to assess and meet the needs of the community.

- **These online-learning days will count on the school year calendar**. The NH Department of Education has been clear with schools that these days will count and there should therefore be no need to extend the school year. Teachers are putting some great plans in place to engage students in their learning and we will continue to find new ways to support students and families through this.
- **March 27th will still be a No School day in Portsmouth**. Teachers will still use this day for professional development. This day is even more critical in our new remote learning environment as teachers need support and training on some core online tools we are expanding, as well as an opportunity to share what is working with each other.
- **Be mindful of online safety**. To support the safety of all students as we engage in digital learning, click here for some good reminders about staying safe on the internet https://careerwise.minnstate.edu/education/internetsafety.html
- **Do your part to discourage gatherings of people**. All school buildings are closed to the public at this point. We are supporting online collaboration among teachers. Like other City Boards and Commissions, the School Board will not hold a meeting on March 24th, but hopes to meet virtually with public access at some point in the near future.

Volunteers: Operation Blessing is receiving calls from folks to volunteer. And would like to organize them into one system. Please click here www.nhresponds.org then click on Medical Reserve Corps and then Seacoast MRC.

COAST, Senior Transportation and Meals on Wheels are still operating.

Portsmouth Housing Authority asks citizens to restrict visits so as not to put their more-susceptible residents at greater risk.

- All Portsmouth Housing Authority Senior and Multi-Unit properties are closed to the public. Only essential caregivers, health care workers and people delivering food or medical supplies are authorized to enter, and only when absolutely necessary. These properties include Margeson, Feaster, Woodbury Manor, State Street, Pleasant Street and Betty's Dream Apartments, as well as Atlantic Heights, Connors Cottage and Lafayette School Senior Housing.
- PHA offices are open via telephone and email only, at 603-436-4310 or info@nh-pha.com
- If PHA residents need assistance they should call our Resident Services Coordinators at 603-957-8131 or via email at people@nh-pha.com.
- All area medical and home care agencies that must provide on-site services to their consumers are encouraged to contact Executive Director Craig Welch at craigwelch@nh-pha.com or 603957-2485 with questions.

"Adopt-A-Senior" – The City Health Officer asks: Would everyone please check with any senior or disabled neighbors who live alone -- by phone, a wave through the window as you are walking by, perhaps a note. DO NOT go inside or speak face-to-face in close proximity. Maintain social-distance. If you are concerned about people living alone who may not know how to get food or medicines, or seem like they just need someone to check in with them on occasion, please contact the Health Department in Portsmouth at 603-610-4187. Or the Health Officer for your town.

DPW

- **NEW Snow storm overnight is expected to be primarily a 'salting' event.** But due to staffing it may take longer to clear sidewalks. Residents are asked to be careful as there may be slippery patches.
- **#WIPESCLOGPIPES! Please dispose of disinfectant wipes in a separate trash bag.** Flush only toilet paper or tissues in the toilet (even the wipes marked "flushable" can clog pipes like this). Pipes from your home are much smaller in diameter than City sewer lines, so clog much more easily.
- Residents should continue to use Click 'n Fix as needed so service requests can be logged and addressed.

- **The recycling center is open and staffed to allow just a few vehicles at a time for social distancing.**
- **Trash pickup is on the normal schedule and yard waste pickups have also begun** but may be limited by the availability of workers and trucks.
- **Trees & Greenery invites you to participate in the City's Adopt-A-Spot Program** -- a great family project you can do while staying 6 feet part.

NEW: PARKING: Portsmouth City Council voted to enact a Free Parking to April 6, 2020. On-street and public garage parking fees are suspended at all City parking meters. **Patrons with monthly parking contracts in the garages will receive a 75% credit for the month of April to account for this three-week free-parking period**. Should the Council decide to extend the Free Parking, further adjustments to monthly parking fees will be made at that time. Payment for discounted April monthly parking can be made by check at either garage office, by mailing to 1 Junkins Avenue c/o the Parking Clerk's offices, or by dropping a check into the gray mailbox at City Hall. Please be sure to include your parking card number on your check.

Recreation/Parks Department

- **A reminder that you should not congregate – anywhere**. This includes avoiding gathering of people at beaches, as the weather gets nicer. Social-distancing is the new norm.
- The Easter Bunny has informed the Portsmouth Rec Department that, unfortunately the **annual Easter Egg Hunt scheduled for April 4, 2020 has been CANCELLED.**
- **All spring sport sign-up sessions originally scheduled to start April 7, 2020 are also POSTPONED** until a calendar can be set.
- Buildings, playgrounds, ball fields, basketball courts and dog parks remain closed.
- **City Parks are open.** Residents are encouraged to enjoy our open spaces, parks and off-leash dog areas. The NH State Parks are also open.

Portsmouth Police Department reminds citizens to be vigilant about phone calls and emails requesting donations. Scams are popping up nationwide, asking for donations for doctors, medical supplies and other emergency resources. Be very careful. Make sure you are dealing with a trust-worthy charity.

NH DMV has extended the expiration date for temporary motor vehicle plates and licenses. All temporary plates issued after March 1. 2020 are now valid through April 30, 2020. For information about how vehicle registration works in NH, click here. City residents can renew their registrations online here. **State drivers' licenses and ID cards set to expire can be extended by phone for 6 months**. Call 603-227-4020 to pay for and complete the extension.

For the latest list of Portsmouth restaurant/food takeout, pickup and delivery options, click here. Note that restaurants with on-premise liquor licenses can now sell beer/wine with takeout food orders.
https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/sites/default/files/2020-03/RestaurantTakeout%202020.03.20b.pdf

The Farmers Markets are cancelled, but many participants are offering direct food sales from their farms. Click here for the Seacoast Local directory of these resources.

BUSINESS & EMPLOYEES

The City's Economic Development Department suggests the following resources that might be of use: one for business and industry issues and the other regarding employment law.

The NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA) has started this page to keep employees and businesses update. It includes links to New Hampshire Employment Security and available services. Individuals will need to file for unemployment each week of temporary unemployment and this can and should be done online here or by calling 603-271-7700.

- **Seacoast SCORE in Portsmouth** has nearly sixty volunteers are working with local businesses to tackle the impact of Covid-19. **The local SCORE business professional mentors are briefed on**

the new SBA Coronavirus Disaster Relief Lending Program. sba.gov/disaster **They can help your business navigate the application and financial process.** Email: info@scorehelp.org, Phone 603-433-0575 and request a SCORE mentor specialist to work with you. Seacoast SCORE is a volunteer non-profit 501(c)3 affiliate of the SBA, dedicated to helping small businesses in our communities.

For information about the stores, businesses and restaurants that are open, go to the Chamber Collaborative's GoPortsmouthNH.com website.

For information about business assistance resources, go to the Chamber Collaborative's COVID-19 website page.

Local businesses have also put together the following resources:

- Information about which businesses are still operating, doing web programming, etc.
- Website to support local businesses through the purchase of giftcards for use later
- Women-owned Business Support Group for NH and Maine

Public utilities Eversource, Unitil and Liberty Utilities -- and the City Department of Public Works Water & Sewer Divisions -- have suspended all disconnect orders and/or late fees. An Executive Order from Governor Sununu prohibits all evictions and foreclosures until at least April 1, 2020.

Residents in Portsmouth, New Castle, Rye, Newington or Greenland who require assistance should contact the City's Welfare Department. Call 603-610-7267 or email WFDept@CityofPortsmouth.com

For answers to other questions about the City's response to COVID-19, please email: hotline@cityofportsmouth.com

For more information, visit the Health Department page on COVID-19