CITY OF PORTSMOUTH

UPDATE from the City Manager for Sunday, March 29, 2020

Governor Sununu's Stay At Home order is in effect, now through May 4, 2020.

Keep looking out for each other! Our social-distancing efforts -- including avoiding benches and other gathering spots -- seem to be helping, so far. PLEASE continue as we do our part to flatten the curve.

This was to have been the wrap-up to Maple Month in New Hampshire. We hope everyone is celebrating, accordingly.

- Did you know the NH Maple Producers Association is still selling maple products by mail order? Many of these Producers have order-online websites. https://nhmapleproducers.com/maple-month/
- And for all the schoolchildren who had hoped to see how sap becomes syrup by hanging all those buckets on your playground trees, here are some online learning resources from the Maple Producers, too! https://nhmapleproducers.com/educational-resources/ and Where's Maple? https://www.agclassroom.org/nh/resources/doc/maple_lesson/WheresMaple.pdf

NEW INFORMATION DAILY

- Volunteer opportunities and needs
- Online resources from the Veterans Administration
- School Department updates for Monday, March 30 (see below)
- CARES Act Guide for Small Business Owners
- DPW Recycling Center is now taking checks-only, no cash, for the usual special fees.
- Gov. Sununu Emergency Orders https://www.governor.nh.gov/news-media/emergency-orders/
- To sign up for this newsletter, click here.

You'll find this link to COVID-19 INFORMATION **at the top of the homepage. The links include:**

- Gov Sununu's Stay-At-Home Order
- Gov. Sununu's detailed definition of "Essential Businesses"
- Health-related information
- Food aid, grocery resources and restaurant takeout options
- Business and employee resources
- An archive of all City Manager Daily Advisories

VOLUNTEERS & DONATIONS

For those who need volunteers and those who want to volunteer, sign up with VolunteerNH.org which is focusing on COVID-19 related relief right now.

The NH Charitable Foundation has started a specific COVID-19 "Community Crisis" response grant program to complement other efforts being undertaken, including United Way of the Greater Seacoast and the New England Grassroots Environmental Fund. Direct donations to nonprofits are also critical right now. **Please continue to give to organizations you regularly support, and those that need additional help**.

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.

Operation Blessings asks those who are interested in volunteering to use this online system. Please click here then click on Medical Reserve Corps and then Seacoast MRC.

"Adopt-A-Senior" – Check on your senior and/or disabled neighbors who live alone -- by phone, a wave through the window as you are walking by, or a note. DO NOT go inside or speak face-to-face in close proximity. If you are concerned about people living alone, please contact the Health Department in Portsmouth at 603-610-4187. Or the Health Officer for your town.

VETERANS

The VA Medical Center in Manchester is urging veterans to use the VA's online tools for telehealth appointments, prescription needs, questions and automated text messages. As with all doctors' appointments, *call first*. Click here for the VA's online patient portal is There's also a VideoConnect app. For more information, click here For more information, click here.

FOOD RESOURCES

REVISED: **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. The list of options changes daily so check the SeacoastOnline.com list of Seacoast area restaurants, too.

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

UPDATE: Food Resources
For an updated list of available food aid resources, click here.

Meals on Wheels: Starting on April 2nd, meal delivery will be reduced to Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. There will not be meal delivery on Tuesdays and Thursdays. An extra meal will be included on Monday for Tuesday and on Wednesday for Thursday. Additionally, they will continue to deliver extra shelf-stable food and frozen meals, just in case. New customers are still being accepted, so please call 603-431-0561 to complete an application over the phone.

Operation Blessings is still providing a drive-up food pantry at 600a Lafayette Rd. Wed-Fri, 10am to 4pm, for anyone who needs food (some restrictions may apply).

- Senior Mobile Food Pantry operates Mon thru Sat, 10am to 4pm. Seniors-only, ages 62+ from Portsmouth, Greenland, New Castle or Rye.
- Gosling Meadows and Greenleaf Rec Center Family Dinners are cancelled until further notice.
- For any questions or to register, call Food Pantry at 603-430-8561 and Food Delivery at 603-988-2671.

GATHER is our local food pantry that serves more than 1,400 Seacoast residents and 400 schoolchildren through the End 68 Hours of Hunger program on weekends

- **Pantry** hours will be reduced starting Monday, March 30, in an effort to follow guidelines from the Portsmouth Health Dept. Volunteer shifts will be adjusted to match up with our current needs, including a few shifts on Thursdays.
    - Mon, Tues, Wed: 10 am – 3 pm at 210 West Road #3 in Portsmouth
    - Thurs: *Closed*

    - Fri: 9am-1pm at Community Campus, 100 Campus Drive in Portsmouth
- **Food Donations** GATHER needs food! Click here for the list of what's needed and where to drop off donations. GATHER is at 210 West Road #3 in Portsmouth.

Back to Single-Use Plastic Bags -- Customers' use of reusable bags is banned. The purpose of the Governor's order is to avoid the unintentional spread of the virus from home environments.

Update on grocery stores:

- **Latest list of food stores and pharmacy hours,** click here**.**

- **Tuscan Market.** Free grocery delivery service in southern NH; includes personal shopping, as well as curbside and home delivery. 603-912-5467.
- **Seniors-Only (age 60+) Shopping Hours**
    - McKinnons -- Daily 7-8am
    - Market Basket, Tues-Thurs mornings, 5:30-7 am
    - Hannaford, Tues-Thurs mornings, 6-7 am

CITY SERVICES & FACILITIES

All municipal buildings and facilities, schools and the Portsmouth Public Library remain closed to the public. City 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.

- **Applying for Elderly/Disabled/Solar abatements?** Click here **for the latest update on new and renewed applications.**
- **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 drop-box in the City Hall parking lot. Call (844) 850-9185 to pay your water/sewer or property tax bills using Interactive Voice Response (IVR). Account number required. ($1.50 IVR fee, plus any credit card fees if paying by credit card.)
- **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.
- **Along with public utilities (gas, electric, cable, phone, etc.) the City Department of Public Works Water & Sewer Divisions have suspended all disconnect orders and/or late fees. Contact the City directly if you're having difficulty meeting a bill deadline.**

- **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.
- **City board, commission and committee meetings are in the process of being scheduled remotely**. **City Council intends to meet virtually on April 6, 2020, as scheduled**. Details to come.
- **Portsmouth Public Library:** For details on all of the on-line services offered by the Library and how to access them, click here.

COAST and Senior Transportation are still operating.

Welfare Assistance: 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

The IRS has announced that the deadline for filing Federal income taxes is now July 15, 2020. For more information about the deadline extension, click here.

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.
- **SOS Recovery Centers are a good option (**for people in recovery). Click here for SOS; and click here for the recovery center in Portsmouth, Safe Harbor.

SCHOOLS

Monday, March 30, 2020:

- **The School Board is holding a public, virtual Zoom meeting on March 30th.** For the agenda and details on participating, click here.
  https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TNgDF80FsHobPzQtqaBhl_WfBUr7EHTG/view
- **Starting Monday, March 30, a 4-day instructional week**. Students will be engaged with teachers on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

Starting April 8: Enrichment Wednesdays.
Our Unified Arts staff is planning enrichment opportunities in the arts, physical education and more, for students at all grade levels. Not required forstudents, but highly encouraged. Each building will be sending out information on how students can access these opportunities. For teachers, Wednesdays are devoted to online collaborations for support, planning and building consistent expectations for students in this remote environment.

School counselors remain available for support to students who are struggling emotionally or in other ways.

Meal distribution: While schools remain physically closed, our breakfast and lunch pick-up and delivery is still in service. HUGE shout-outs to the cafeteria workers and volunteers who have made that so successful! **We will also be doing another curbside pick-up of elementary materials in the next week or so. More information will come from each elementary school.**

Pickup for breakfast and lunch at the Portsmouth High School cafeteria door between 7:30 am and 12 noon, *Monday through Friday*. 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.

Be careful when you're online! 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.

Do your part to discourage gatherings of people. All school , playgrounds and ballfields are closed to the public at this time.

For some virtual learning options, including activities, games and videos offered by the local arts, culture and history resources, click here.

DPW

#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.

- **NEW: As a further precaution the recycling center will take CHECKS ONLY (no cash) for the regular fees charged for disposal of the following items:**

- $ 5 per tire
- $10 per electronic unit
- $20 per freon containing unit (i.e. refrigerators, air conditioners)

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.

PARKING: The Portsmouth City Council voted to enact Free Parking through April 6, 2020. **On-street and public garage parking fees are suspended. Patrons with monthly parking contracts in the garages will receive a proportional credit for the month of April to account for the free-parking period**. Should the Council decide to extend the Free Parking, further adjustments to monthly parking fees will be made at that time.

The city is still enforcing time limits and safety/loading-zone-type parking restrictions. One of the goals is to keep spaces free around restaurants offering takeout services.

In answer to a hotline@cityofportsmouth.com question: **If you wish to cancel your monthly parking pass, you can turn in your card by dropping it in the gray box in front of City Hall** with a note indicating the name(s) of the person(s) wanting cancellation. **However, the Parking Department advises against this because:**

- There will be further adjustments to May's billing if the free parking is extended.
- If a large number of people opt out of their contracts all at once, and then want them back all at once, it would create a significant backlog, possibly causing delays in getting people restarted.

It is best to leave your contract open if you intend to continue parking after this is over. Adjustments will be given to compensate for the free period, and no interruption would be necessary.

PORTSMOUTH HOUSING AUTHORITY

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.

All area medical and home care agencies that must provide on-site services to their consumers should be in **contact with Executive Director Craig Welch** at craigwelch@nh-pha.com or 603957-2485 with questions.

PHA offices are open only via telephone 603-436-4310 **and email** info@nh-pha.com.

If PHA residents need assistance they should contact our Resident Services Coordinators at 603-957-8131, or via email: people@nh-pha.com.

Rents are due, as scheduled. Please contact Executive Director Craig Welch at craigwelch@nh-pha.com or 603-957-2485 with any questions or concerns.

RECREATION/PARKS

A reminder that you should not congregate – anywhere. The Governor's Stay At Home order **closed all NH Seacoast beaches** Social-distancing is the new norm, for now. Buildings, playgrounds, ball fields, basketball courts and dog parks remain closed. NH State Parks – except for all Seacoast beaches – are open. Practice responsible social distancing. https://www.nhstateparks.org/covid-19

Parks & Playgrounds

- For a map of open and closed parks, playgrounds, ballfields, basketball courts, click here.

Note that the following parks are open: Daniel Street Pocket Park, Haven Park, Langdon Park, Goodwin Park, Hanscom Park and Big Rock Park. Also Prescott Park and Peirce Island (no dogs allowed at either).

- For a map showing **off-leash dog parks which are also great walking trails,** click here. Also: Pease Tradeport and Wildlife Sanctuary are great places to walk but are not designated off-leash for dogs. The bike bridge and bike path at Pease are away from lots of people.

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.

Under normal circumstances, the City would start accepting applications for dock space at Prescott Park about now. Due to the social-distancing guidance, Prescott Park docks will not open for the foreseeable future. We'll keep you posted. Remember that the dock extending from the park where the "Whale Sculpture" is located is also closed while repairs to the railings proceed.

BUSINESS & EMPLOYEES

US Senator Shaheen (NH)'s Office has put together a guide for small businesses, explaining the new CARES Act Stimulus program passed by Congress yesterday. Click here for the guide. Also posted to the City's Economic

Development COVID-19 business assistance resources.

NH Employment Security (NHES)

- **Filing for unemployment.** You are assigned a day and time to file based on the first letter of your last name. **The unemployment system hotline is 603-271-7700**.
- **Payments are made beginning eight days from when the claim is filed**. Those filing claims must login again for each week of continued eligibility and file a continued claim.
- **If you're Self Employed and have filed for unemployment benefits**, ignore the Denial Message you receive. **Your unemployment claim requires time to process as a result of your being Self Employed.** You will receive a telephone call from NHES to obtain wage information to process and complete your unemployment claim.

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.

Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth

- **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.
- **For hospitality businesses in particular**, www.GoPortsmouthNH.com.

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 gift cards for use later

STAY SAFE!

Don't congregate. Get outside. Enjoy some fresh air. Just keep your distance. Portsmouth's open space parks and trails are open, but ballfields, basketball courts and playgrounds are NOT. The locks on the gates are there for the protection of all. 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 to emergencies.

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.

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