

For the Week of March 23, 2020

Manager's Message

Aaron Frank, Town Manager

In January, Emergency Management Coordinator Seth Lasker and I began focusing on the coronavirus and its trajectory. We began planning for this specific threat using the Town's Emergency Management Plan. First we met with the public safety chiefs and Deputy Town Manager Geoff Urbanik; then we developed plans for continuity of operations for all Town departments. So while this is unfamiliar territory, we have been planning ahead for both general threats and for this specific threat.

We have been coordinating with the State of Vermont, with our neighboring communities, and holding extra meetings with Town department heads which are now conducted online or by phone.

We have closed the library, canceled recreation programs, and the ACE before and after school programs are now closed. Some municipal services have been purposefully reduced to increase the likelihood of maintaining services over the duration of this emergency. With the exception of crucial municipal services such as rescue, fire, police, dispatch, winter road maintenance, and other critical infrastructure maintenance, our municipal departments will be working remotely or without in person access. We may not have the ability to address non-urgent complaints or issues.

As of Tuesday March 24th, the Town offices are closed to public access until further notice. This was done to reduce virus spread while we do everything we can to maintain our key services. Please call, email, or use our online services or secure drop box outside of the building. We can help you navigate services differently via phone and email. The Town directory is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/Col-Town-Dir> or <https://www.colchestervt.gov/directory.aspx>

We are available by phone and email. Information about Town services: <https://tinyurl.com/Col-Town-COVID> or <https://colchestervt.gov/3193/Covid-19Town-Services>

There is a Community Help Board for non-emergency resident to resident assistance. You may sign up requesting or offering assistance to others at: <https://tinyurl.com/Col-Town-Helping> or <https://colchesterhelping.colchestervt.us/welcome>.

During this unprecedented situation I cannot manage the Town in the typical way. We are focused entirely on continuation of key municipal services including Rescue,

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Fire, Police, public safety dispatch, Public Works services for road maintenance and other critical infrastructure as well the support groups including information technology, human resources, finance, emergency management and coordination of all services are resilient as well.

At the Selectboard meeting on March 17, 2020 I enacted a Declaration of Emergency for the Town of Colchester as follows:

“The COVID-19 Pandemic is and is expected to continue to present an unprecedented wide range of challenges to the municipal services the Town offers to its residents and businesses.

“Our primary role is expected to be to continue key municipal services such as Rescue, Fire, Police, winter road and infrastructure maintenance. We also need to support these services with the facilities and equipment necessary to provide these key resources. Some supports include: information technology, human resources, finance, treasurer, local public information, and coordination of these services at a time when we may see reduced staffing.

“As we have done in Town-wide drills, staff may be called upon to work in different areas in different roles. The Emergency Management Ordinance is intended to formalize a different structure intended to use the Town’s resources differently when faced with an emergency.

“Therefore utilizing powers granted through The Town of Colchester Code of Ordinances Chapter 16 Emergency Management; effective with the reading of this declaration, I am declaring an emergency here in the Town of Colchester in order to exercise emergency powers to help protect the public health and safety of our community.”

Having declared an emergency means that, in addition to being the Town Manager, I am your Emergency Management Director. Deputy Town Manager Geoffrey Urbanik is your Deputy Emergency Management Director. Seth Lasker continues his role as the Emergency Management Coordinator, with a focus on emergency services. Deputy Police Chief Jeff Barton is the Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator. Town-wide Fire Chief Steve Bourgeois has been crucial in providing guidance in response and protective measures to all three fire departments.

My first responsibility will be to respond to the current emergency, but I will provide information to the Selectboard on Town activities if and when meetings are cancelled. We will keep residents informed in the public and transparent manner that we have always done by disclosing items such as approved warrants on future meeting agendas.

For more about the Town Manager visit <http://colchestervt.gov/manager> or call (802) 264-5509.

Parks and Recreation Department
Glen Cuttitta, Director

Town of Colchester Parks and Recreation Department Program Postponement and Cancellations:

As the Town of Colchester Parks & Recreation Department closely monitors the developments related to COVID-19 (coronavirus), we continue to follow recommendations and guidance from the Vermont Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control. Combined with ongoing consultation with Town Administration, Parks and Recreation Staff and the Colchester School District, we have made the following decisions:

Effective immediately:

- All Parks & Recreation office staff will work remotely. They are available during the hours of 7:30am – 4:30pm, Monday – Friday, via email or phone. If you call a Town phone number for the Parks & Rec Dept., you will be connected to our staff. See below directory link.
- All programs offered by the Colchester Parks and Recreation are cancelled or postponed beginning March 16th through April 6th. If you are unsure of the status of your program, please call or email Colchester Parks & Recreation at the info listed below.
- The A.C.E. After School Programs at CMS, MBS, PPS & UMS will be closed as of Wednesday, March 18th. The earliest that the A.C.E. program could resume would be April 7th.
- Colchester Youth Lacrosse (CYL) season start date will be delayed until further notice.
- Colchester Playgroup held at the Colchester Meeting House is postponed until further notice.
- The Winter Concert at CHS scheduled for March 27 is cancelled. The annual Easter Egg Hunt at Bayside Park scheduled for April 11 is cancelled.

We recognize the disappointment and inconvenience this will cause our participants, families, and everyone in our community. We appreciate your patience during this unprecedented time as we all navigate through this pandemic. In an effort to encourage unity and keep our community engaged, programming staff are working on video projects that will be posted to their department social media and website. Anyone can follow and/or subscribe to these pages to enjoy the content. We will

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continue to communicate any updates and/or changes to our programs, classes, and events.

Contact Information: Colchester Parks and Recreation Department, 802-264-5641 or recreation@colchestervt.gov

Parks & Recreation Staff Directory: <https://colchestervt.gov/Directory.aspx?DID=14>.

For more about Parks & Rec visit <http://colchestervt.gov/recreation> or call (802) 264-5640.

Police Department
Douglas Allen, Police Chief

Like the rest of the community, the members of CPD are adapting to the global pandemic and the declared states of emergency in our nation, state, and locality. We are in regular communication with other Town departments as well as our first responder and law enforcement partners with the goal of providing necessary public safety service to the community while keeping our staff, and those with whom we interact, as healthy as possible.

In keeping with that goal, we will be conducting as much interaction with callers by telephone if possible. If you need to see an officer and have one respond to a given incident, we will be practicing as much social distancing as possible. We ask for your understanding if an officer remains away from close interaction with people.

In addition to canceling scheduled training and unnecessary travel for our staff, we also have temporarily suspended our participation with Meals on Wheels. We did not want to expose their vulnerable clients to officers that must interact with others. We'd like to remind everyone of our "Hello, how are you?" program where we make daily check-in calls with those members of our community that need that support. We accept new sign ups at any time!

Since February 20th, CPD has responded to 934 calls for service. These calls resulted in 41 arrests for criminal violations including Fugitive from Justice, Burglary, and Criminal Driving with a Suspended License.

For more about Colchester Police Department visit <http://colchestervt.gov/police> or call (802) 264-5556 (non-emergency).

Upcoming Town Meetings:

- **Planning Commission:** 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of the month, 7:00pm. Next Meeting: 4/7 has been **canceled**.

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- **Development Review Board:** 2nd Wednesday of the month, 7:00pm. Next meeting: 4/8 has been **canceled**.
 - **Recreation Advisory Board:** 2nd Wednesday of the month, 7:00am, Champlain Room, 2nd floor. Next meeting: 4/8 has been **canceled**.
 - **Conservation Commission:** 3rd Monday of the month, 7:00pm, at the Bayside Activity Center or per agenda. Next meeting: 4/20
 - **Library Board of Trustees:** 3rd Thursday of the month, 4:30 PM at Burnham Library. Next meeting: 4/16
 - **Selectboard:** 2nd & 4th Tuesday of the month, 6:30pm. Next meeting: 4/14
- (All meetings take place at the Colchester Town Offices, 781 Blakely Road, in the Outer Bay Conference Room on the 3rd floor unless otherwise noted.)

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