

## Report to Council

<b>Report Title:</b>	COVID-19 Municipal Response - Update		
<b>Prepared By:</b>	Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk and Fiona Hamilton, Clerk		
<b>Department:</b>	Clerk's		
<b>Date:</b>	April 7, 2020		
<b>Report Number:</b>	CLK2020-10	<b>File Number:</b>	C11CL, P03CO
<b>Attachments:</b>	N/A		

### **Recommendation:**

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CLK2020-10 – COVID-19 Municipal Response - Update, prepared by Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk and Fiona Hamilton, Clerk for information purposes and further confirms and ratifies all operational decisions, procedures, and cancellations put in place by staff, the Brockton and Area Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee, and the Municipal Emergency Control Group in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Report:**

#### **Background:**

Staff brought forward Report Number CLK2020-09 – COVID-19 Municipal Response, at the Special Council Meeting on March 19, 2020, explaining the departmental responses and decisions taken by the Municipality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On March 23, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. Mayor Chris Peabody declared a State of Emergency in the Municipality of Brockton, allowing the Municipality to make use of all tools at its disposal to protect the health and well-being of all residents and businesses, including accessing any provincial funding that may become available in the future.

#### **Analysis:**

The Municipal Emergency Control Group continues to meet regularly to address each department's responsibilities, requirements, and proactive measures that have been taken in response to COVID-19.

#### **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 under the Departmental Responses portion of this report.

A total of five Information Bulletins have been distributed, along with a [Press Release](#) announcing the State of Emergency, and [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) regarding tax and utility billings.

A [Community Information Sheet](#) was created providing residents with information on available services, health questions, information available to seniors or people with compromised immune systems, pharmacies, grocery stores, and restaurants offering home delivery or take-out services. The Community Information Sheet was distributed to vulnerable populations in Brockton, advertised on the municipal website, social media accounts, and was recently included in the Special COVID-19 Issue of the Brockton Buzz Newsletter that was mailed to residents on April 1, 2020.

A [Special COVID-19 Issue of the Brockton Buzz Newsletter](#) was created and mailed to all households in Brockton on April 1, 2020.

Mayor Chris Peabody continues to provide regular COVID-19 Video Updates to the public, which are displayed on the municipal website, and social media accounts, including the Municipality's [YouTube Channel](#). To date, six videos have been created – totalled together the engagement of all six videos is 828 views on YouTube and 9,937 views on Facebook. Residents appreciate the personal touch of Mayor Peabody's video updates, and staff thank him for his willingness to participate.

## **Departmental Responses**

### **Administration:**

At the March 19, 2020 Special Council Meeting, Council delegated authority to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to perform a number of duties while the COVID-19 pandemic continues. Staff continue to be required to make immediate decisions as a result of COVID-19 precautions and this By-Law is only a precautionary measure if required and a quorum of Council cannot be achieved.

Sonya Watson, CAO continues to maintain communication with Mayor Peabody, Bruce County CAO's, the Grey Bruce Health Unit, and the County of Bruce on a weekly or more frequent basis.

The rotating shift schedule has been limited even further, allowing more staff to work remotely from home. This schedule ensures the continuation of municipal and emergency operations involving as many healthy employees as possible per shift. Staff continue to work in the municipal office one day, and work remotely from home the following day. All staff continue constant communication with their Supervisor by phone and zoom video.

Procedures have been put in place to ensure staff safety when handling incoming mail and documentation. Additional cleaning and sanitation supplies were provided to all departments to ensure the health and safety of our staff.

A conference call system was purchased through Wightman Telecom to allow the Municipal Emergency Control Group, departments, and staff to communicate via conference calls to practice physical distancing and limit further exposure.

All departments have submitted Business Continuity Plans for the CAO's review to ensure essential services continue during the pandemic. Staff continue to develop training procedures, and ensure that employees are cross-trained for essential services.

All municipal facilities have been closed until further notice as a decision of the Municipal Emergency Control Group.

**Brockton Child Care Centre:**

The Provincial Government declared the need for daycares an essential service, so staff consulted with the Medical Officer of Health and Ministry of Education. However, the need for daycares in Brockton was deemed low, so the Brockton Child Care Centre will continue to remain closed until further notice.

**Building:**

The Building Department continues to process building permits via email, PDF documentation, and any paper documents that come into the Municipal Office. Building permits are invoiced out to applicants and paid online through the individual's banking institution.

Inspections still continue as required with increased protocols in place to ensure the safety of staff and contractors while working on sites. Contractors have been reminded to ensure the safety and proper sanitation of their construction sites.

**Clerk's:**

The Clerk's department continues to process and distribute all communication from the Municipality. The Clerk's department also minute all Municipal Emergency Control Group Meetings.

As noted for the April 7, 2020 Special Council Meeting, the Clerk's Department have researched a number of electronic meeting software providers, and purchased a monthly license with Zoom Video Communications to conduct electronic Council Meetings, and livestream the meetings to the Municipality's YouTube channel. The license also allows for remote interviews for human resources and for training for the fire department. The meetings will also be recorded and saved in the Municipality's records.

The Procedural By-Law has also been amended for the April 7 Special Council Meeting to allow for electronic meetings.

Brockton Committee and Board Meetings have now been suspended until May. Committees have been instructed to contact the Clerk on any urgent matters.

The Clerk's department is creating a filing structure for all COVID-19 pandemic records.

Marriage licenses continue to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

**Economic Development:**

The Community Development Coordinator continues to connect with local businesses, and the Walkerton BIA to provide reassurance and assistance during this time.

Staff continue to develop a Business Continuity Plan to assist our local businesses manage the challenges associated with COVID-19. A [Business Recovery and Support page](#) has been created on our website, and has also been linked on the Municipality's [COVID-19 Updates page](#) to inform businesses of information and supports available for them during this time. Staff will also be creating an 'Open for Business' webpage to include a list of local businesses, and the adjusted services they are offering to residents, including pharmacies, groceries, and stores.

Staff have developed several [Brockton Business Newsletters](#) focused on the COVID-19 pandemic to ease the burden on businesses, and continue to provide support. Staff have reached out and had conversations with many business owners in the community.

Staff also advertised a [COVID-19 Business Survey](#) on our community engagement website, [Build Your Brockton](#), analyzing the impact of COVID-19 on our local businesses. The COVID-19 Business Survey project was visited by 166 people, since its launch on March 20, 2020. The survey was easily accessible to businesses, allowing respondents to complete the survey anonymously, without requiring a login for the site. To date, 51 responses have been received on the survey. The survey will close on April 7, 2020. Businesses will then be encouraged to complete the County of Bruce's COVID-19 Business Survey.

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer has also been invited to sit on the County of Bruce's Business and Economic Development Recovery Committee as a representative for the CAO's across the Bruce County to assist the County in their establishment of the Business Recovery Plan. Ms. Watson will work with the Community Development Coordinator and provide updates and information on new programs as they are available.

kbdesign created a logo to celebrate the resilience of the Brockton community, and raise morale among businesses and residents during the pandemic. The "In It Together" logo has been shared throughout the community, and may be developed into promotional items, such as a flag to display at the community flag pole in Walkerton. Staff will continue to update Council as this arises.



### **Finance:**

The tax due dates of March 31 and May 29 were not changed; however the penalty and interest charges on tax billings are being waived until June 30, 2020. The deadline for utility bills also remains unchanged.

As mentioned previously, a Frequently Asked Questions Fact Sheet was created to provide residents with more clarification on the tax and utility billings, including the waiver on the penalty and interest for tax bills.

Staff are reviewing capital projects with all departments, identifying budgetary impacts, and determining if any projects should be postponed until 2021 as a result of the pandemic.

Staff continue to track all departmental financial implications as a result of COVID-19.

**Fire:**

Both the Walkerton and Elmwood Fire Stations have been closed to all firefighters. Disinfection protocols have been put in place at the stations. Firefighters will also be required to electronically complete a self-assessment when entering the Fire Hall.

Conference calls have been established to allow firefighters to continue communication while the stations are closed. Online training procedures are also being established.

Firefighters continue to practice physical distancing and not co-mingle. Calls for medical responses have been reduced to assist in limiting exposure at the scene, and reduce the number of firefighters attending calls.

The fire department is collaborating with the building department to create an inspection policy to ensure the health and safety of staff and contractors.

A fire ban was issued on April 2, 2020 for agricultural and recreational fires to limit the exposure of firefighters to ensure their availability for other emergencies.

**Human Resources:**

Staff continue to develop policies regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, and assist employees in managing the impact of the pandemic on their employment status. Staff also work closely with the Finance Department to assist in payroll related matters as a result of the pandemic.

There is an increase in Human Resource activities as a result of the pandemic that the CAO, CFO and Human Resource Generalist are attending to daily.

Interviews and orientation continue to be conducted electronically where applicable.

**Operations:**

Curbside recycling collection was temporarily suspended in the Municipality due to health and safety concerns brought forward from our outside contractor. Staff worked diligently to discover an alternate solution to restore curbside recycling collection for all residents as of March 31. Materials continue to be recycled, and not landfilled.

The Greenock Landfill continues to remain closed until further notice. The Brant Landfill has adopted new spring hours as of April 1, and will be open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Additional protocols and cleaning supplies have been implemented at the landfill sites to ensure the safety of staff and the public. Full continuation of this service is regularly under review to ensure staff safety.

Public Works staff continue spring maintenance, and maintain physical distancing protocols, and rotating shifts.

Detailed contingency plans continue for municipal water and wastewater. Staff communicate daily with Veolia Water. The Walkerton Clean Water Centre has offered their services in case an additional operator is needed at Veolia Water as per the provincial directive.

The Walkerton Cemetery is open as of April 1, with interments planned for April 6. Staff have been in communication with the Cemetery Caretaker, and Cameron's Funeral Home to ensure services continue.

### **Parks and Recreation:**

The Parks and Recreation Office is closed to the public until further notice. All outdoor recreational amenities, including playgrounds, sports fields, basketball and tennis courts, picnic areas, outdoor community gardens, park shelters and facilities are also closed until further notice. Greenspaces in parks and trails will remain open for walkthrough access but individuals must maintain the safe physical distance of at least two metres apart from others. Signage has been placed at municipal playgrounds, trails, and amenities to notify the public that the facilities are closed until further notice.

All recreational and leisure programs, including private bookings have been postponed until further notice.

A sub-committee has been established, consisting of Recreation staff to support the vulnerable populations and ensure that our vulnerable residents are cared for during this time of need. They are collaborating with service clubs and volunteers in the community to ensure the continuation of Community Support services to provide residents with reassurance. A number of service clubs have volunteered their services to assist in the pandemic. As mentioned previously, a Community Information Sheet was also distributed to residents.

### **Internal Communications:**

Regular internal communications remain a priority to ensure all staff are aware of changes as they occur. Staff's health and safety is a priority for the Municipality. Staff have been 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.

Staff are requesting Council's ratification of the operational decisions that have been established in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Enforcement of Provincial Orders:**

The Ontario Provincial Police (O.P.P) are in regular contact with staff and are actively enforcing the provincial orders made under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* limiting gatherings of more than five (5) people. Education is being encouraged as a first step in encouraging compliance, with officer's instructed to use discretion as the circumstances may warrant. Krista Miller, detachment commander, noted that the O.P.P can also assist in enforcing orders under the Quarantine Act, but only at the request of a screening officer or quarantine officer.

The O.P.P. has also increased business core patrols to act as a deterrent against mischief and other property crimes. To assist the O.P.P. is helping to deter crimes of this nature, as well as vandalism, municipal staff continue to inspect municipal parks, properties, and facilities on a regular basis. Residents with concerns of damage, vandalism, or mischief occurring in Brockton's recreational facilities or amenities have been directed to contact the Parks and Recreation Department. If residents witness damage, vandalism, or mischief while occurring, they have been encouraged to call 911 to notify the O.P.P. The O.P.P. also have an online reporting

tool available on their website [www.opp.ca](http://www.opp.ca) which allows residents to report minor occurrences such as theft, mischief to property, lost property and driving complaints that occur in areas policed by the O.P.P.

The Province of Ontario has also recently allowed municipal by-law enforcement officers, or any appointed provincial offences officer, the authority to enforce the orders under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. While there does not appear to be a need to deploy municipal resources for this purpose at this time, staff are closely monitoring the situation and will be in contact with the OPP and consult with neighbouring municipalities to determine if increased enforcement efforts should be considered.

### **Brockton and Area Physician Recruitment**

The Brockton Area Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee was also able to recruit and secure a surgeon, Dr. John Stirrat, to begin working at the South Bruce Grey Health Centre – Walkerton on July 1, 2020. Both parties have signed a Letter of Intent committing Dr. Stirrat to begin his surgical practice in Walkerton.

### **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. It is expected that there will be a significant impact on the 2020 budget. The Finance Department has prepared a separate report explaining certain immediate financial impacts from COVID-19 that will be presented to Council on April 7, 2020.

### **Reviewed By:**



**Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer**

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### **Respectfully Submitted by:**



Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk



Fiona Hamilton, Clerk

**Reviewed By:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sonya Watson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer**