

City of Keene
New Hampshire

March 31, 2020

TO: Keene City Council
FROM: Mayor George Hansel
RE: FOR PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION – COVID-19 update

Over the next 2-3 days, the New Hampshire National Guard will be in Keene to help our community plan and set up an alternative care facility on Keene State College's campus. This plan will be used to increase Keene's capacity to treat sick people should that become necessary. This effort will also provide space to house frontline responders and healthcare workers in need of isolation. Setting up this facility is a precaution, and there is no immediate need for its use. The City emergency management team and I have been participating with other community partners in the planning process for this space. I am thankful to the Governor Sununu, the State Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the New Hampshire National Guard for this assistance. Additional partners include Keene State College, the Cheshire Medical Center and Monadnock Community Hospital. This activity will be contained on the Keene State College campus and should not inconvenience the public. The installation is scheduled to be completed by the end of this week.

Updates from the State of New Hampshire:

- The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has released a new [map](#) for tracking confirmed COVID-19 cases. Cases will now be reported at the town/city level rather than just by county.
- The New Hampshire Attorney General's Charitable Trusts Unit has issued a [scam alert](#) as a result of the COVID-19 Outbreak. Citizens are reminded to:
 - Be careful when making charitable donations. Check to ensure charities are registered with the AG's Charitable Trusts Unit. A current list of active charities is available [online](#).
 - Beware of false claims and deceptive marketing around products purported to be related to COVID-19.
 - Be on the lookout for fake CDC emails. Attachments may include viruses and malware.
 - To report a charitable giving scam, contact the Charitable Trusts Unit by phone: 603-271-3591 or email: charitabletrusts2@doj.nh.gov.
 - To report a business-related scam, contact the Consumer Protection Hotline by phone: 1-888-468-4454 or email: DOJ-CPB@doj.nh.gov.
- At a weekly conference call between Governor Sununu and New Hampshire mayors, we've started to discuss how the \$2.2 trillion dollar federal stimulus package may be used to support local communities. Much of this funding will flow through the State of New Hampshire.
- The City Managers of Keene, Durham, and Rochester have sent a letter to Governor Sununu requesting local authority to waive interest on tax bills for up to three months. This will provide

citizens with some flexibility in when they pay their local property taxes. I am grateful for this creative solution put forward by these New Hampshire city managers.

Changes to City Operations:

- The Library will no longer be offering curbside pickup. This decision was made by the Library Trustees to protect their staff and employees.
- Several departments have started to implement limited unpaid furloughs to last throughout this emergency. Most of these employee positions had direct interaction with the public which is now not possible. The closure of several City facilities have temporarily changed how we do business and what we can offer to the public. We intend to reinstate these positions once this emergency is over (this is not a layoff). In addition, we will help any of these employees who wish to complete an unemployment application.
- The City Manager has continued to re-assign staff where appropriate. The HR department has also created a comprehensive Work From Home Policy and will allow some employees to work from home.
- Outdoor sports and playground facilities are closed. Open spaces such as Keene parks and trails remain open to the public as places to explore with proper social distancing.

Waste Management Operations:

- The last few Saturdays have seen a significant increase in traffic at the Recycling Center/Transfer Station. We are encouraging customers to consider altering their schedules to visit this facility during the week Monday-Friday 7am-3pm. Additionally, we are encouraging customers to reduce the number of trips to the facility (making a bi-weekly trip, rather than weekly, for example). Heeding these recommendations will make it possible for the public to better maintain proper social distancing while using the Transfer Station.

Public Utilities:

- Eversource is implementing several measures that will lessen the financial hardship on their customers, including small businesses.
 - Any disconnections for nonpayment have been postponed.
 - In normal operations, small business customers get up to three months for bill payment arrangements. Eversource is offering a \$0 down payment and a 12-month payment arrangement, with the first payment not due until June 1.
 - During the COVID-19 emergency, Eversource is rescheduling all planned outages, as well as routine non-outage, service-related work inside residences or businesses.

Public Outreach:

The public is encouraged to participate in the Mayor's Virtual Town Halls daily, Monday-Friday at 8am. Credentials for the Zoom meeting change daily and can be found by visiting: www.notifykeene.com. Additionally, participants can call in via telephone by dialing 603-766-5646 and using the participant code: 981441.

The Mayor's Daily Virtual Town Hall Schedule for the rest of the week:

- Wednesday, April 1st – County Administrator, Chris Coates, will be available to answer questions regarding the county jail and Maplewood Nursing Home.
- Thursday, April 2nd – Dr. Don Caruso, Cheshire Medical Center CEO, will be available to provide an update and answer questions.
- Friday, April 3rd – Small Business Friday - Jack Dugan from MEDC, Mollie Kaylor from the Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA), and Vardhan Bajpai from the Small Business Administration (SBA) will be available to discuss small business loans and relief programs. It is also important to note that nonprofits can now qualify for low interest [SBA loans](#).