

City of Keene
New Hampshire

March 17, 2020

TO: Keene City Council

FROM: Mayor George Hansel

RE: FOR PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION – COVID-19 update on City operations

Last Friday, the Governor issued an [Executive Order](#) declaring a state of emergency in the State of New Hampshire. Additionally, City Manager Elizabeth Dragon has declared a local state of emergency due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus. This week has also seen a ramp up in the collaborative efforts between the City's emergency management team and our valuable community partners. Several new actions are being taken to protect our employees and ensure the delivery of vital services to our citizens under any circumstances. Overall, the City has taken and continues to take a very measured approach.

Most recent activity as part of the City's proactive response to COVID-19:

City Meetings: As of March 17th, internal staff meetings will be hosted through WebEx video conference or by electronic means whenever possible. Meetings of the City Council, the three standing committees, and the Planning Board will also utilize technology to hold virtual meetings. The Governor has provided a [Memorandum](#) which provides guidance around holding public meetings using electronic means in compliance with RSA-91A. Check your City email for invites and associated instructions.

Business Engagement – On Tuesday March 16th, the mayor and the Greater Keene Chamber of Commerce hosted a virtual meeting for Keene small business owners. More than 40 business owners participated in the WebEx video call. A member from Senator Shaheen's office also participated in the call and provided an update on and legislation which may provide federal economic relief to small business owners. Another WebEx meeting for businesses will be scheduled for 8AM on Friday, March 20th and will feature a representative from the Small Business Administration (SBA). Any business owners who wish to participate in Friday's virtual meeting can email the mayor's office at mayor@ci.keene.nh.us for an invite. A similar virtual meeting is being planned for nonprofit organizations in the coming weeks.

Homeless Services – On Tuesday, March 17th, the emergency management team, city manager, and the mayor hosted a planning session to address the needs of Keene's homeless population. Hundred Nights Shelter, the Community Kitchen, the Salvation Army, Monadnock Family Services, Southwestern Community Services, and various faith groups participated in the meeting.

Public Facilities – The closure of the Keene Public Library and Recreation Center buildings will be extended until April 6th. As of Tuesday, public access is suspended at both Keene fire stations and the police station. This has been done to protect our first responders. The remainder of City facilities remain open at this time, and all other City services will maintain normal operations. City facilities are being cleaned regularly according to CDC recommended sanitation practices in high-touch areas.

Parking Services – Complimentary parking will go into effect for the downtown until April 6th to allow our small businesses to accommodate delivery and curbside pickup.

Preparedness Measures –Employees who still may be planning to travel outside the US on their personal time or to any US community with sustained community transmission are asked to notify their supervisors of the destination, dates, and mode of transportation for their planned travels.

Public Services – Burn permits will not be issued (temporarily) and assembly inspections will not be performed until the Governor’s assembly restriction order has been lifted. All other inspection services will continue as normal. The public is still encouraged to use online services whenever possible. [Contact City departments by phone](#) for services not available online.

Emergency Wage Benefit Program – Much of the City’s workforce has access to ample sick leave balances that can provide income replacement for absences related to any illnesses, to care for an immediate family member or relative living in their households. To provide support for employees without sick leave balances, an Emergency Wage Benefit Program is being established. This program will provide employees without sick leave with a wage benefit of 80% of lost wages in the event an employee is required to stay home missing a scheduled shift, because of 1) their illness or that of immediate family member or relative in the household that requires the employee to perform care associated with acute respiratory illness, or 2) related symptom or for sickness prevention requiring self-isolation related to COVID-19 pursuant to DHHS recommendations.