

City of Keene
New Hampshire

March 19, 2020

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

Until further notice, councilors are strongly encouraged to use WebEx video conferencing technology to participate in council and standing committee meetings. Members of the public are similarly encouraged to watch public meetings via the city's [website](#), or on cable channels 1302 or 1303. This technology is well-proven and should allow us to interact, deliberate, vote, and eventually hear live public testimony. I'm asking for patience while we get accustomed to using these new methods to conduct business.

I am cancelling the standing committee meetings that were scheduled for next week (March 25th and March 26th). I will also be postponing the meeting of the Planning Board that was scheduled to take place on March 23rd. This is to allow City staff to establish and test an online option for holding meetings that allows for participation and comments during those meetings. All advisory committees, boards, or commissions will also be cancelled until at least April 6th.

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

Business Outreach – On Tuesday March 16th, the mayor and the Greater Keene Chamber of Commerce hosted a virtual town hall for Keene small business owners. More than 40 business owners participated in the WebEx video call. 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). I'm requesting that only business owners participate in the call as we have a limited number of WebEx licenses. 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.

Public Engagement – The mayor's office will be putting out bi-weekly memorandums to the city council with updates on the City's operations. Councilors are encouraged to share this information with their constituents and personal networks. Virtual town halls are also being planned to provide updates from our valuable community partners such as Keene State College and Cheshire Medical Center. These town halls will be open to the public and will allow for public questions and comments.

Intergovernmental Cooperation – On Thursday, March 19th, the mayor participated in a conference call with Senator Shaheen and other mayors from across New Hampshire. Federal legislation has passed the US Senate to expand federal food and sick leave assistance programs. Other economic relief efforts are being considered. The mayor has also been having regular discussions with the county administrator, state commissioners, and the Governor's office to share information and coordinate efforts. The City manager and staff continue to work across various levels of government to coordinate our local emergency response.

Public Facilities – While all City departments are open, public access to City buildings is restricted in line with current best practices. We are fortunate that many transactions and interactions between the city and the public can be done telephonically or online. We are recommending that the public utilize this technology whenever possible.

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