

COVID-19: Town of Merrimack Response Recommendations

Town Council Presentation

March 18, 2020



Action Items

- **COVID-19 Statement**
- **Emergency Declaration**
 - **Closing Town Facilities to the public**
- **Public Meetings**
- **Outreach – Elderly and At-Risk Residents**
- **Election April 14, 2020**
- **Exemptions and Credits for Solar/ Elderly/
Disabled/and Veteran**
- **Closing Ball Fields, Parks & Playgrounds**



COVID-19 Statement

In light of our national and state emergencies, elected officials and all levels of employees for the Town of Merrimack wish to communicate our continued commitment to the health and safety of our citizens. Each town department has reviewed their mission and have determined and defined how any altered procedures may be needed as a result of these continuing challenges. We believe it is imperative to continue to communicate the status of our town services so each citizen will be knowledgeable and comfortable that all critical services will be maintained. We ask that our citizens understand that decisions made regarding services will be made based upon health and safety priorities. Town Hall will be closed to the public. Most of the services are available on-line and town business will continue to be conducted as much as possible.

During these unprecedented times we must all work together with patience, kindness and tolerance to meet the needs of our community.



Emergency Declaration

Emergency Ordinance #1 ("EO1") Pursuant to Section 5-5 of the Merrimack Charter

§ EO1-01. Enacting Clause

The Town of Merrimack ordains that effectively immediately upon adoption of this Ordinance, the designated Town facilities and operations will be closed to the public in order to prevent/reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to comply with the CDC guidelines that gatherings be limited to 10 people or less.

Feasible and practical accommodations will be made to allow the public online access to Town resources and to transact Town business, as may be determined by the Town Council and the Town Manager.



Emergency Declaration Cont.

§ E01-02. Declaration/Purpose

The Merrimack Town Council finds that an emergency exists as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and that this pandemic affects the life, health and safety of the public necessitating this Emergency Ordinance.

§ E01-03. Authority

Section 5-5 of the Merrimack Charter and RSA 41:11-a concerning management of Town property.

§ E01-04. Administration

This Ordinance shall be administered by the Town Council and by the Town Manager and/or her designee(s).



Emergency Declaration Cont.

§ E01-05. Effective date

This Ordinance shall become effective upon passage.

Pursuant to Section 5-5 of the Merrimack Charter, this Emergency Ordinance shall automatically stand repealed on the 61st day following the date of adoption. This Emergency Ordinance may be reenacted at that time if deemed necessary by the Town Council.



Public Safety: Fire/EMS Department

Emergency Services

- **Fire and Emergency response services will largely proceed normally, with social distancing and other health safety protocols utilized as much as possible**
- **Dispatchers will screen callers to assist in identifying those that could be impacted by COVID-19**
- **Additional precautions will be made by responders to protect their health through additional protective gear**
- **Additional post-response cleaning/disinfection protocols now in place**



Public Safety: Fire/EMS Department

Changes to non-emergency public interactions:

- All fire prevention/public education events, tours and visits are suspended.
- Car Seat inspections are suspended.
- All overhead doors and outside doors (other than the main front door) will be closed and locked at all times.
- Station visitors shall be restricted to the lobby to the extent possible while maintaining vital operations.
- Burning permits will be handled via a sign-up sheet in the Station 1 and 2 lobbies. Permits can also still be obtained online as well.



Public Safety: Fire/EMS Department Cont.

- A phone extension has been added to the secure lobby at Station 1. All visitors will use the phone to contact either the Fire Marshal or Building & Health Division.
- Visitors wishing to speak to the on-duty crews will ring the doorbell. On duty personnel will then call the lobby phone to speak to the visitor, to minimize face to face contact.
- Personnel at Station 2 will keep the inside lobby door locked and the office window closed most of the way. Personnel will answer citizen questions and needs from a safe distance.



Public Safety: Police Department

Emergency Services

- **Patrols and emergency response will largely proceed normally, with social distancing protocols utilized as much as possible**

Changes to non-emergency public interactions:

- **Live Scan fingerprinting for members of the public will not be available.**
- **All non-emergency complaints will be handled over the phone.**
- **The department will continue to conduct House Checks, but will only take requests over the phone.**



Public Safety: Police Department Cont.

- **Citizens are encouraged not to visit the police department lobby unless absolutely necessary. Any requests made in person will be handled via the lobby telephone to limit face to face contact.**
- **Report requests will temporarily stop. If a report is needed for an emergency purpose, you may call the police department to request the information for pickup.**



Day-to Day Operations: Town Clerk/Tax Collector

- **Registration of Newly Acquired Vehicles:**
 - 20 day temporary plates issued after March 1, 2020 will be valid until April 30, 2020.
 - Staff is working to establish a process for those who do not have or qualify for temporary plates.
- **Renewal of a Car Registration:**
 - Online via the website portal
 - Via mail (checks or money order only)
 - Via dropping a check in the drop box (check or money order only).



Day-to Day Operations: Town Clerk/Tax Collector

- **Copies of Vital Records (Birth or Death Certificates):**
 - Can be made via the website portal or via mail.
 - For mail transactions, please contact the Town Clerk's office by phone or e-mail
- **Tax and Sewer payments:**
 - Online via the website portal
 - Via mail (checks only and post-dates will be honored as the date of payment)
 - Via check in the Drop box outside Town Hall



Day-to Day Operations: Town Clerk/Tax Collector

- **Dog licensing:**
 - Online via the website portal
 - Via mail (checks or money order only)
 - Via dropping a check in the drop box (check or money order only).
- **Boat licensing:**
 - Renewals can be made via mail or by the drop box (check or money order only).
 - Registration of new boats by appointment only, contact Town Clerk's office by phone or e-mail.



Day-to Day Operations: Town Clerk/Tax Collector

- **Voter registration:**
 - **Contact Town Clerk by phone or e-mail**
- **Absentee ballots for Town Meeting:**
 - **Request for absentee ballot can be made via mail, fax, or email (written or scanned request with signature is required).**
 - **An absentee ballot request form can be found in the Elections and Voting pages of the Town Clerk's website**
<https://www.merrimacknh.gov/elections-voting>



Day-to Day Operations: Assessing

- **Call/e-mail the Administrative Assessor for the following:**
 - **Property Record Cards**
 - **Intent to Cut and Intent to Excavate Permits**
- **Filing for and renewals of Exemptions and Credits:**
 - **Can be sent by mail or dropped off in the drop box; questions should be directed to Administrative Assessor via phone or e-mail**



Day-to Day Operations: Building/ Health Division

- **Fire and Code Enforcement:**
 - Inspections will be limited to essential inspections and complaint follow-up.
 - Contact Fire Marshal by phone or e-mail
- **Home and Building Inspections:**
 - As long as construction proceeds, inspections will continue either virtually or in person.
 - Contact the Building Division staff by phone or e-mail for more information.



Day-to Day Operations: Building/ Health Division

- **Building Permits:**
 - **Permit applications are available on-line and at Central Fire Station lobby.**
 - **Permit applications will be processed and reviewed, expect up to 2 weeks turnaround time**
 - **Electrical, Mechanical and Plumbing applications are available on-line and at Central Fire Station lobby**



Day-to Day Operations: Community Development

- **To file land use board submissions, or to review property files, site plans, subdivision plans, etc.:**

Contact staff via e-mail or phone to arrange.

- **No-contact protocols will be in place for application submissions**
 - **Review of property files/plans will be limited to digital files only (items are already electronic or easily scanned and e-mailed)**
- **Please follow @ComDevMerrimack on Twitter**



Day-to Day Operations: Community Development

- **Planning/Zoning Questions/Inquiries:**
 - E-mail/call the Planning & Zoning Administrator
- **Economic Development Inquiries**
 - E-mail/call the Community Development Director
- **GIS/map questions: visit the GIS website portal (www.merrimackgis.org)**
 - If citizens have questions, e-mail/call either the Public Works Director or Community Development Director



Day-to Day Operations: Media (Cable Access) Division

- **Business hours will be changed to Monday through Friday from 8:30am - 4:30pm.**
- **No public use of the community TV studio and no evening hours (unless an elected board or committee holds a meeting).**
- **Contact Media Division Staff by phone or e-mail with questions/inquiries.**



Day-to Day Operations: Public Works

- **The Department is committed to continuing to provide normal services to residents and businesses, but will be limiting inter-personal contact as much as possible.**
- **Department and Division Contact Information is available on Town webpage.**
- **Please also follow @MerrimackDPW on Facebook**



Day-to Day Operations: Town Manager/General Government

- **Contact support staff by phone or email for:**
 - **Burial plot sales and internments**
 - **Itinerant Vendor Licenses**



Day-to Day Operations: Welfare

- **Developing and providing alternative means of handling applications and processes (electronically, by mail, by phone) wherever possible.**
- **Contact the Welfare Administrator by phone or e-mail with questions and inquiries.**



Transfer Station

- **Remains open for trash and recycling operations.**
- **Swap Shop closed indefinitely, all items brought to the Transfer Station must be disposed of in the proper place.**
- **Contact Transfer Station Office by phone with any questions about where to dispose of items.**



Parks and Recreation

- **Recreation Programs:**
 - **All Recreation programs and Function Hall Rentals that are scheduled through April 6th have been cancelled.**
 - **The Department continues to promote programs that are taking place from May - September using online registration system**
 - **The Easter Egg Hunt which was scheduled for Saturday, April 4th is canceled.**
 - **Town athletic fields are closed until further notice.**



Merrimack Public Library

- **The Library is closed to the public until March 20, and then fully close as of March 21.**
 - **Reassessment of the closure should happen on or around April 3.**
 - **Library public Wi-Fi will remain on during closure.**
- **All meeting room use, programs and events are CANCELLED through April 30.**



Public Meetings

- **Land Use Boards:**
 - **Planning Board will only meet once per month, as required by state statute. Minimum quorums will be present to reduce exposure risks.**
 - **Conservation Commission & Zoning Board meetings are indefinitely postponed.**
- **Other Boards/Commission meetings are cancelled or indefinitely postponed.**
- **Town Council: Future meetings are to be determined.**
- **Town is looking into Video Conferencing**



Outreach: Elderly & At-Risk Residents

- **COVID-19 Information:**
 - **State Hotline – 211**
 - **Servicelink – 866-634-9412**
- **Meals on Wheels**
 - **According to the Program Director who indicated the program is active and taking new clients or referrals.**
 - **Available to senior citizens who are home bound due to illness or disability. For senior citizens 60+ there is no income requirement.**
 - **Goal to get each senior 2 weeks of frozen meals.**
 - **Meal delivery to continue as long as they are able or told to stop by State.**
 - **Need: Volunteers to assist volunteers & hand sanitizer – Call 603-424-9967**



Outreach: Elderly & At-Risk Residents

- **All Merrimack Senior Citizens Club meetings have been suspended until further notice.**
- **All O'Leary Adult Community Center daily activity calendar participants have been advised of the decision to suspend activities.**
- **Nashua Transit – still fully operational for paratransit bus services**
- **Harbor Homes – Mobile Crisis Response for Behavioral Health Crisis (603-816-0101)**
- **Food Pantries: both St. James & St. John Neumann Churches staying open**
- **Grocery Stores and Pharmacies – delivery may be available**



Outreach: Elderly & At-Risk Residents

- **Merrimack Police: Good Morning Call Program to elderly homebound (*Apply by contacting Merrimack PD*)**
- **The Police Department is in direct contact with the President of the Senior Citizen's Club. She has direct access to over 230 seniors in town and will act as our liaison for getting information out to them. She will also contact Capt. Tarleton if she knows of someone in need.**
- **We have identified a point person in each of the adult communities where large populations of seniors reside. Information will be funneled through them and they in turn will contact us with persons identified as needing assistance.**
- **Our officers will continue to be visible in the senior complexes to answer questions and check on residents.**



Outreach: Elderly & At-Risk Residents (Comcast/Xfinity Resources)

- Xfinity Wi-Fi hotspots available to anyone for free, including non-subscribers.
- Xfinity is pausing internet data plans for 60 days giving all customers unlimited data for no additional charge.
- Internet Essentials Service Free to New Customers for 60 days. <https://www.internetessentials.com>
- Visit Xfinity's web site www.xfinity.com/wifi for more details



Community Outreach

- **Governor's Executive Orders:**
 - **Temporary Prohibition of Disconnection/Discontinuance of Utility Services (Electric, Gas, Water, Telephone, Cable, Internet, Heating Fuels)**
 - **Temporary Prohibition of Evictions and Foreclosures**
 - **Access to State Unemployment Benefits for those individuals whose jobs are impacted by COVID-19**



Community Outreach

- Facebook Live

Thursday at 4:00 pm, Merrimack Police and Fire, in conjunction with Merrimack Media Department will present a live presentation “Merrimack in Motion” for education on the Town of Merrimack’s response to the COVID-19 crisis.



Election April 14, 2020

Pursuant to RSA 40:4, “[i]f an accident, natural disaster, or other emergency occurs which the moderator reasonably believes may render use of the meeting location unsafe, the moderator may, at any time prior to the scheduled deliberative or business session, postpone and reschedule the session to a date, place, and time certain.”

The statute requires the moderator to use whatever means are available to inform citizens of the postponement and the rescheduled date or dates. At a minimum, that would require posting such notice on the town’s website, publishing notice at the meeting place, and posting notice in other public areas.

In making this determination, moderators are encouraged to consider the latest public health guidance. Applicable guidance follows:



Exemptions and Credits for Solar/ Elderly/ Disabled/and Veteran

- RSA 72:33- 1-a

1-a. If any person, otherwise qualified to receive an exemption or credit, shall satisfy the selectmen or assessors that he or she was prevented by accident, mistake, or misfortune from filing a permanent application or amended permanent application on or before April 15 of the year in which he or she desires the exemption to begin, said officials may receive the application at a later date and grant an exemption or credit for that year; but no such application shall be received or exemption or credit granted after the local tax rate has been approved for that year.



Ball Fields/ Playgrounds/ Parks

- Bishop Field
- Tim Gibson Complex
- Reeds Ferry Fields
- Twardowsky Field
- Twin Bridge Ball Field
- Vets Park Ball Field

Playgrounds

- Kids Cove
- Norma French
- Vets Parks

Parks

- Skate Park
- ATV Park
- Dog Park
- Tennis Courts





TOWN OF MERRIMACK

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NEW HAMPSHIRE

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