

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH



UPDATE from the City Manager for Friday, March 20, 2020

Creative solutions for the situation we find ourselves in:

Although the Portsmouth Public School Department reports that some parents have inquired about how they might suspend or expel their students from the on-line home learning program... the new system is earning high marks for the thought and care that went into preparing the learning packets for each student. Many local museums with educational programs, such as Strawberry Banke, Seacoast Science Center, Children's Museum of New Hampshire and others are offering "virtual classrooms and field trips" on their websites.

All municipal buildings and facilities, schools and the Portsmouth Public Library are closed to the public. But services are staffed *Monday through Friday*, according to staggered work schedules to minimize the number of people in the same place at the same time.

- **City Hall is closed to the public.** A skeleton staff is in place to answer the phone and perform City business. Residents are asked to use the City's [online services](#) to process their water bills, parking tickets, taxes, fees, fines, permits, etc.
- **Fire Department** has suspended scheduled fire protection inspections and the issuing of any burn permits. If you have a Class 1 or 2 permit (backyard, etc.) the permit expiration is extended to June 1, 2020.
- **Building Inspections** continue for unoccupied and exteriors of buildings.
- **Planning Department:** For information about land use applications and submission deadlines click here - <https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/planportsmouth/news/instructions-submitting-land-use-applications-during-covid-19-shut-down>
- **All City board, commission and committee meetings have been postponed until further notice.**
- **Portsmouth Public Library** for details on all of the on-line services offered by the Library and how to access them, click here. <https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/library/news/coronavirus>
- **School Department** resumes student meal delivery next week with **extended hours** for pickup at Portsmouth High School: 7:30 am to 12 noon, Monday through Friday.

DPW:

- **WIPES CLOG PIPES! Please dispose of disinfectant wipes in a separate trash bag.** Flush only toilet paper or tissues in the toilet (even the wipes marked "flushable" can clog pipes [like this](#)).
- Residents should continue to use [Click 'n Fix](#) as needed so service requests can be logged and addressed.
- **The recycling center is open and staffed to allow just a few vehicles at a time for social distancing.**
- **Trash pickup is on the normal schedule and yard waste pickups have also begun** but may be limited by the availability of workers and trucks.
- **Trees & Greenery invites you to participate in the City's [Adopt-A-Spot Program](#)** -- a great family project you can do while staying 6 feet part.

Recreation/Parks Department

- **A reminder that you should not congregate – anywhere.** This includes avoiding gathering of people at beaches, as the weather gets nicer. Social-distancing is the new norm.
- The Easter Bunny has informed the Portsmouth Rec Department that, unfortunately the **annual Easter Egg Hunt scheduled for April 4, 2020 has been CANCELLED.**
- **All spring sport sign-up sessions originally scheduled to start April 7, 2020 are also POSTPONED** until a calendar can be set.
- Buildings, playgrounds, ball fields, basketball courts and dog parks remain closed.
- **City Parks are open.** Residents are encouraged to enjoy our open spaces, parks and [off-leash dog areas](#). The [NH State Parks](#) are also open.

Senior transportation and Meals on Wheels are operating as usual.

- **Seniors-Only (age 60+) Shopping Hours** are available Tues-Thurs mornings at Market Basket and Hannaford. Click here for details on these and food/pharmacy delivery options. <https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/sites/default/files/2020-03/FoodPharmacyDelivery%202020.03.20.pdf>

Portsmouth Housing Authority asks citizens to restrict visits so as not to put their more-susceptible residents at greater risk.

- All Portsmouth Housing Authority Senior and Multi-Unit properties are closed to the public. Only essential caregivers, health care workers and people delivering food or medical supplies are authorized to enter, and only when absolutely necessary. These properties include Margeson, Feaster, Woodbury Manor, State Street, Pleasant Street and Betty's Dream Apartments, as well as Atlantic Heights, Connors Cottage and Lafayette School Senior Housing.
- PHA offices are open via telephone and email only, at 603-436-4310 or info@nh-pha.com
- If PHA residents need assistance they should call our Resident Services Coordinators at 603-957-8131 or via email at people@nh-pha.com.
- All area medical and home care agencies that must provide on-site services to their consumers are encouraged to contact Executive Director Craig Welch at craigwelch@nh-pha.com or 603-957-2485 with questions.

Volunteers: Operation Blessing is receiving calls from folks to volunteer. And would like to organize them into one system. Please click here www.nhresponds.org then click on Medical Reserve Corps and then Seacoast MRC.

Feeling anxious? there are many people feeling anxieties about the current situation. Kim McNamara, City Health Officer suggested these resources who are there to help:

- Seacoast Mental Health has geared up for exactly these challenges call 603-431-6703 or click here. <https://smhc-nh.org/covid-19-updates/>
- Families First Seacoast, SOS information & services, [click here](#).

Portsmouth Police Department reminds citizens to be vigilant about phone calls and emails requesting donations. Scams are popping up nationwide, asking for donations for doctors, medical supplies and other emergency resources. Be very careful. Make sure you are dealing with a trust-worthy charity.

NH DMV has extended the expiration date for temporary motor vehicle plates and licenses. All temporary plates issued after March 1, 2020 are now valid through April 30, 2020. For information about how vehicle registration works in NH, [click here](#). City residents can [renew their registrations online here](#). **State drivers' licenses and ID cards set to expire can be extended by phone for 6 months.** Call 603-227-4020 to pay for and complete the extension.

For the latest list of Portsmouth restaurant/food takeout, pickup and delivery options, click here. Note that restaurants with on-premise liquor licenses can now sell beer/wine with takeout food orders. <https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/sites/default/files/2020-03/RestaurantTakeout%202020.03.20b.pdf>

The Farmers Markets are cancelled, but many participants are offering direct food sales from their farms. [Click here for the Seacoast Local directory of these resources.](#)

The City's Economic Development Department suggests the following resources that might be of use: one for [business and industry issues](#) and the other regarding [employment law](#).

The NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA) has started [this page](#) to keep employees and businesses update. It includes links to [New Hampshire Employment Security](#) and available services. Individuals will need to file for unemployment each week of temporary unemployment and this can and should be [done online here](#) or by calling 603-271-7700.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) Coronavirus Disaster Relief Lending Program

Loans for up to \$2 million can be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that can't be paid because of the disaster's impact.

Eligibility: small businesses without credit available elsewhere. Interest rate 3.75% (non-profits, 2.75%).

Repayment: To keep payments affordable, loan repayment options up to a maximum of 30 years.

Get a head-start as the program is being authorized by following these steps:

- Go to: sba.gov/disaster
- Find the section specific to the Coronavirus Disaster Relief Lending program.
- Create an account and upload your information so that once the formal declaration is processed by SBA, yours will one of the first applications to be considered.

Seacoast SCORE in Portsmouth has closed its physical office during the outbreak, but nearly sixty volunteers are working with local businesses to tackle the impact of Covid-19. **The local SCORE business professional mentors are briefed on the new SBA loan program. They can help your business navigate the application and financial process.** Email: info@scorehelp.org, Phone 603-433-0575 and request a SCORE mentor specialist to work with you. Seacoast SCORE is a volunteer non-profit 501(c)3 affiliate of the SBA, dedicated to helping small businesses in our communities.

For information about the stores, businesses and restaurants that are open, go to the [Chamber Collaborative's GoPortsmouthNH.com website](#).

For information about business assistance resources, go to the [Chamber Collaborative's COVID-19 website page](#).

Local businesses have also put together the following resources:

- [Information about which businesses are still operating](#), doing web programming, etc.
- Website to [support local businesses through the purchase of giftcards](#) for use later
- [Women-owned Business Support Group for NH and Maine](#)

Public utilities Eversource, Unitil and Liberty Utilities -- and the City Department of Public Works Water & Sewer Divisions -- have suspended all disconnect orders and/or late fees. An Executive Order from Governor Sununu prohibits all evictions and foreclosures until at least April 1, 2020.

Residents in Portsmouth, New Castle, Rye, Newington or Greenland who require assistance should contact the City's Welfare Department. Call 603-610-7267 or email WFDept@CityofPortsmouth.com

Downtown Parking is free through March 31, 2020. On-street and public garage parking fees are suspended at all City parking meters.

For answers to other questions about the City's response to COVID-19, please email: hotline@cityofportsmouth.com

For more information, visit the [Health Department page on COVID-19](#)