

MEMORANDUM



To: Bedford Town Council
From: Rick Sawyer, Town Manager
Date: May 12, 2020
Re: **Manager's Report**

News & Noteworthy:

- 1) COVID-19 Pandemic Update – Bedford remains in the top 7 most impacted communities for the number of COVID-19 positive patients with impacts in some of our long term care facilities as well as the general community. I strongly encourage all residents to follow the CDC and State of NH recommendations for protecting yourself when out completing necessary travel during the Stay at Home 2.0 Order. Those recommendations include wearing a face covering and washing hands as often as possible. In the early weeks of the pandemic our emergency personnel had little contact with COVID-19 patients, but now it is very much a part of their typical day.

Our Fire Department has been designated a Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) Provider which allows our team to provide training and complete Coronavirus testing in partnership with our 7 long term care facilities. This program is expected to cost approximately \$7,000 in overtime expenses which will be covered under FEMA PA 75% and hopefully 25% under the GOFERR program. This is an essential service for us to provide in hopes of keeping our most vulnerable residents safe.

- 2) COVID-19 Relief Funds and Acts. We are currently addressing the responsibilities, requirements, and responses to all of the following financial relief programs and employer/employee programs:
 - a. GOFERR Funds – The Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery has made \$32M available to local municipalities to reimburse eligible COVID-19-related expenses out of the CARES Act funding for costs incurred from March 1, 2020 to August 31, 2020 that are outside of the FEMA PA Program. Bedford's allotment based on population is \$543,847. Currently these funds would be used for our non-emergency response items like: telework costs, increased election costs, wages and benefits required by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act for non-first responders, childcare costs for first responders and essential employees due to school closures, cleaning supplies, signage, separation barriers, increased welfare costs, and emergency responder stipend expenses not covered by that program (see item d below). They cannot be used for lost revenues.
 - b. FEMA Public Assistance Program - The Disaster Declaration is valid from January 20, 2020 forward. Currently, the PA program has a 75% federal cost share, in which the town is responsible for 25%. A request has been made to be able to use the GOFERR funds for the 25% match but typically federal funds cannot be used as the match.

This program is where we will seek reimbursement of emergency response costs such as PPE, over time, pandemic related training, and disinfection materials.

- c. DOJ Grant – This program allows us to acquire items needed for the long response to the pandemic and we anticipate being approved for approximately \$87,000 for items such as disinfecting equipment, ventilators for the ambulances, and a decontamination shelter.
 - d. Emergency Responder Stipends – The Governor has provided the opportunity for a \$300 a week stipend to our full time police officers and firefighters and \$150 a week to our part time / call members for the months of May and June. We currently have 71 full time and 11 part time personnel that are eligible. The State will reimburse the Town for the stipend amount but we are responsible for the payroll taxes and administrative costs for making the payments through our payroll system and tracking eligibility. The costs can be recovered through the GOFERR allotment.
 - e. CARES Provider Relief Fund – Bedford has been allotted \$29,195.09 but comes with a condition that we cannot seek out of pocket expenses (beyond insurance) for COVID-19 positive patients. Our team has made a recommendation to me to accept these funds as we expect the majority of COVID-19 patients to be covered by Medicare where we typically receive approximately 72% of what we receive from a privately insured patient so this will help to make up those losses. Additionally our ambulance revenues are down for the year over 2019 due to the stay at home order.
 - f. US DHS-FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant – We have made a request through this grant for 8 powered air purifying respirators (PAPRs) which is a superior form of PPE that cover the head and face could be utilized by those on shift each day and are reusable. Value is approximately \$25,000.
 - g. Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), Expanded Paid Sick Leave Act (EPSLA) and the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLEA). All three of these acts have taken significant time to understand and implement with new policies across all departments and education to our employees.
- 3) Motor Vehicle Registration – The lobby of the Town Office Building has reopened for limited hours 10 AM – 4 PM for motor vehicle registration and other bill payments ONLY. At risk members of our community or anybody else who is not comfortable coming in can make an appointment for weekday morning hours by contacting the department at 472-3550 and MV@BedfordNH.org. Motor vehicle registrations also includes boats and trailers. We do encourage people to continue taking advantage of online or mail in options whenever possible as maximum occupancy in our lobby is 4 customers. **Please wear a face covering and keep a 6 foot separation to others when coming to the building.** Offsite payment option can be found on our website <https://www.bedfordnh.org/819/Online-Bill-Payment>.
- 4) Public Library – The Library is now offering contactless curbside pickup of library materials for cardholders 10 AM – 2 PM, Monday - Saturday.

How It Works:

- Place a request on a Bedford item by using the [online catalog](#) or by calling 472-2300.
 - We will call you when your item(s) is ready for pickup.
 - Before you leave the house for the Library, or when you arrive, call 472-2300. We will then check the item(s) out to you and place your item(s) on the table outside the main entrance. After the staff person has returned to the building, come to the table to pick up your items.
 - Read, enjoy, and return in the outdoor bookdrop between 10 AM - 2 PM, Monday – Saturday.
- 5) Temporary Outdoor Dining Permit – The Town has created a [temporary permit](#) that allows existing food service establishments that choose to operate under the “NH Stay at Home Order 2.0” to begin serving customers through outdoor seating. Establishments with previously approved outdoor seating do not need a temporary permit unless they request additional seating beyond what has been previously approved.
 - 6) Bedford Cares – continues to provide an incredible service to members of our community who are in need of assistance with such things as shopping and picking up of prescriptions while also making donations to the Bedford Food Pantry that now exceeds well over 1,000 pounds of food. If you need their support please reach out to them at 792-1319 or on <https://www.facebook.com/BedfordNHCares/>. I can't thank Councilor Ricciardi enough for her continued relentless efforts.
 - 7) Bedford Sewing Battalion – has been a tremendous resource for the community by providing thousands of masks to anyone who needs them including Town and School District employees on a moment's notice. I truly appreciate their efforts. They can be reached at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/222249565687445/>
 - 8) Pool, Courts, Skateboard Park, Playgrounds – currently remain closed and we continue to monitor the Governor's Reopening Recommendations for guidance on how to move forward with these facilities. It is likely that tennis courts will be able to be open very soon, but the other items may need to stay closed at least through the Stay at Home 2.0 order. We are looking closely at keeping the pool closed for the year as a way to save costs, especially if physical distancing requirements will force us to have a very limited number of participants at any one time.
 - 9) Memorial Day Parade – Cancelled.
 - 10) Camp Witzel – Cancelled. Unfortunately the physical distancing requirement together with the likely inability to go on field trips and the school buildings being closed to the public has forced us to cancel our summer camp for the year. Refunds will be provided to the 16 families that had registered.
 - 11) The Town Clerk, Supervisors of the Checklist, and the Town Moderator have started looking at implications of the pandemic on the September Primary and November General Elections in order to make any necessary changes. The State has determined that voters may vote

absentee if they have any concerns with attending an election as a result of the pandemic which will likely significantly reduce the people at the polls, but also overwhelm our typical absentee voting process. I am confident the team will be able to develop new procedures along with anticipated cost impacts over the coming weeks and in plenty of time to educate the public.

- 12) I truly can't thank our employees enough for all of their efforts adapting to the changes the pandemic has caused to their work responsibilities. The amount of creativity they have shown across all department with their online presence has been fantastic. Their desire to serve the public at the highest level is truly commendable. Their planning and implantation on phased re-openings where possible shows their commitment to their jobs and the community. All of this work is being completed while many are dealing with remote learning, child care issues, working remotely, and unfortunately in some cases being quarantined, isolated, or even having COVID-19 positive coworkers, family, and friends.
- 13) The last day to make party affiliation changes prior to the September 8th Primary Election is Tuesday, June 2, 2020. With the Town Office Building being closed you are asked to make an appoint if you need to change your affiliation by contacting the Town Clerks Office at 472-3550 or townclerk@bedfordnh.org. You can check your affiliation through the Secretary of State's website at <https://app.sos.nh.gov/Public/PartySearchResults.aspx>
- 14) Tax bills are on schedule to be issued by the end of May with a July 1st due date. The first bill of the year is based on the tax rate set in 2019 with property valuation updates made for any changes to the property completed by April 1, 2020.
- 15) The deadline for applying for elderly, disabled, blind property tax exemptions and veterans, disabled veterans tax credits is extended from April 15 to June 1, 2020 for NEW applicants. Please contact the Assessing Department at 472-8104 or visit their website for more information <https://www.bedfordnh.org/149/Assessing>
- 16) Please register your dog(s) prior to June 1st in order to avoid any late fees.
- 17) 2020 Census – Bedford currently has a response rate of 78.1% which is second in the state which is great. I would love to see Bedford be the first community to reach 100%. Please complete the Census by going to <https://my2020census.gov/> It truly takes less than 10 minutes to complete.

Project Updates:

- 1) 2020 Roads Program – The early season good weather has allow the 2020 Roads Program to get off to a great start with work being conducted in one form or another on more than 20 roads. Finish Pavement: Darling Street, Dery Street, Gendron Street, Hall Avenue, Johnson Street, Lawes Avenue, Merry Street, Sandstone Drive, Savoie Street, & Woodlwan Avenue. Reclaim and Binder: Donald Street, Old Bedford Road (Donald to Rte 114 bridge), Cote Lane, Stephen Drive, Strawberry Hill, Random Road Culverts: Beaver Lane, Blanford Place, Elk Drive, Grey Rock Road, & Windsong Circle. Work has also been initiated on Hitching Post Lane, Kahliko Lane, and Valley View Road. Lastly, that final paving on Donald Street (between the

Manchester town line and Old Bedford Road) and on Old Bedford Road (between Donald Street and the Route 114 overpass bridge) will occur on May 14th. Expect alternating one-way traffic and delays.

- 2) Sportsman Field – Unfortunately all four bids received for the project exceed our available budget by at least \$400,000. The DPW team, low bidder, and our consultant have reviewed the plans to see if changes could be made that would bring it within budget, but the possible changes identified would result in reducing the quality of the materials and field safety, and reduced longevity while still not getting the project within budget. Should state or federal infrastructure funds or other grants become available this project could be submitted as it is shovel ready. We will also continue to look for funding options and potentially discuss the project further with the Council at your retreat.
- 3) 2019 Audit – The Finance team with assistance from most departments have been extremely busy over the last few weeks completing the 2019 audit which is being conducted remotely as a result of the pandemic. The audit appears to be going well, but has added stress and time as a result of needing to scan and respond to each item electronically as well as being down a person in the Finance Department.
- 4) Personnel: On April 27, 2020, we welcomed our newest Probationary Police Officer Adrien Dupuis, who is originally from Manchester and comes to the Bedford Police Department with six (6) years of experience as a certified law enforcement officer with the Hampton, VA Police Department. One conditional police officer position is pending a background check and if approved would have the officer in the Police Academy this summer. Two communications specialists openings remain however one conditional offer has been made. All other hiring's have been placed on hold at this time and will be reviewed on an individual basis to determine if they should be filled during the initial phases of the pandemic.

Events:

- May 25th – Bedford Town Offices, Library, Transfer Station, & BCTV Closed for Memorial Day.

Upcoming Meetings:

- May 12th – 7:00 PM, Historic District Commission
- **May 13th – 7:00 PM, Town Council**
- ~~May 14th – 7:45 AM, Water & Sewer Committee~~
- May 18th – 7:00 PM, Planning Board
- May 19th – 7:00 PM, Zoning Board
- May 26th – 7:15 AM, Highway Safety Committee
- May 26th – 7:00 PM, Conservation Commission
- **May 27th – 7:00 PM, Town Council**
- May 28th – 7:00 PM, Energy Commission

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