

Monthly Report of Town Activities – April 2020

This report includes a few of the noteworthy efforts by your Town departments.

Assessor

- While the Assessor's Office is closed to public access, we are able to continue answering inquiries through emails and phone calls
- We are conducting our annual field review normally, but we are not conducting any interior inspections per recommendations from the Vermont Tax Department
- We are reviewing all surveys, subdivisions, and permits to make sure we have made the appropriate changes to affected parcels
- We will be lodging the Grand List and mail Change of Assessment Notices at the end of May, on schedule
- We are preparing to conduct appeal hearings using video conference or conference calls, as recommended by the Tax Department

Economic Development

- Working with State Commerce & Community Development and Colchester Community Development Corporation on the Restart Vermont program for businesses
- Continue working with business community and assessing impacts of COVID 19 while identifying available resources
- Communicating Town wide service, changes and information to residents and businesses through various channels

Town Clerk

- Realign priorities and job responsibilities for the Clerk's Office to continue serving the public with reduced staff
- Guest appearance by 'Doug Under' at the Clerk's daily morning online meeting. He owed it to me after scaring me earlier that morning
- Land records filing continues to be busy, mostly for discharges and refinancing mortgages
- The Clerk's staff is planning what our office will look and act like when we start to open back up to in person public access

Planning and Zoning

- Planning and Zoning Coordinator, Sean Cannon, resigned to take a new position with FEMA and move closer to family
- Assistant Zoning Administrator, Jane Dion, retired on May 1st after 22 years of service to the Town
- Lisa Riddle, Zoning Administrator, is acting director as called upon by Sarah Hadd to cover intermittent leave
- Limited inspections are performed one day a week
- Six new residential permits (2 more than April last year)
- 42 Multi-purpose permits (7 more than April last year)

- For a total of 67 permits and \$2,245,036 in value (17 more permits than April last year but \$900,000 less in value)
- Planning Commission meetings are cancelled through July and will be re-evaluated after that time

Public Works

- Continuing to advance the design for the reconstruction of the Prim and West Lakeshore Drive Intersection project
- Preparing for contract execution for the Blakely Road/Laker Lane Intersection project for construction this summer.
- Continuing the design for stormwater improvements in Shore Acres and the surrounding area to improve water quality in Malletts Bay
- Continuing the development of a phosphorus control plan to improve water quality in Malletts Bay
- Continuing to advance 30% engineering for the replacement of culverts beneath Lower Mt. View Drive

Parks and Recreation

- Spring programs have been cancelled or postponed until after May 30th
- Touch A Truck event in May has been cancelled
- Program staff is producing RecTv, a series of exercise, crafts and cooking classes
- Three full-time Parks staff still working on spring cleaning of parks and municipal buildings
- Summer camp preparations continue
- Working with contractor to get the Causeway Reconstruction project restarted
- Construction of the Airport Park Pickleball started May 5
- Physical distancing signs have been placed in all Colchester parks
- Colchester Park Playgrounds are closed to public access

Burnham Library

- Adjusting services with reduced staffing since the end of April
- Remaining personnel have prioritized programming and services
- Curbside pickup is scheduled to start May 16th
- The Board of Trustees plan to meet via Zoom on May 21st

Fire

- Career Captain Dale Newton started May 1st. Dale is working closely with the Chief on completing tasks required for the new department by July 1st
- Process is underway for the hiring of the two fulltime firefighters. The two chosen candidates will start around June 1st
- Continuing to adjust operations to deal with COVID-19.
- Meeting remotely with members of all three Departments working towards July 1st kickoff of town-wide department
- Started the planning for an inauguration event on July 1st, to celebrate the beginning of the New town-wide Colchester Fire Department.

Rescue

- In March there were 130 emergency medical calls, compared to 146 calls last year
- In April there were 104 emergency medical calls, compared to 132 calls last year
- This is a significant decrease in call volume for the last 2 months, however with COVID and home isolation this was to be expected. Two of the areas we saw a reduction were in Motor Vehicle Crashes as there were very few drivers on the road and citizens not calling 911 for lower acuity illnesses as they did not want to contribute to overtaxing the healthcare system. These next couple of months will be a good indicator of what we could expect for call volume moving forward. We do expect call volumes to return to somewhat normal levels
- We continue to monitor communications and updates from the VT State Health Dept. pertaining to COVID 19 which are posted daily. As you are all aware of, the restrictions are starting to loosen up for the general public. EMS continues to be on high alert and the level of PPE for all patients is at the highest level of protection. This is to help protect providers and the public from potential spread
- Our current state of PPE is good, we are not concerned for the short term (2 months), however we are diligent about trying to obtain N95 respirators. We have confidence that supply chains for these items will slowly start to come back soon as manufacturers are stating they are producing them in the US
- Attitudes and moral is high at Rescue. Personnel are getting a little tired of treating all incidents as a hazmat scene however they do understand this is going to be the normal for some time and are accepting it more.
- We would like to thank the town administrators and the board for all of your support during these difficult times. The Rescue personnel see this support and it has made them all feel confident that this town has their back by providing the necessary PPE to keep them safe while performing their EMS duties

Police Department

- After some reduced staffing under our continuity of service plan, we now have restored full staffing. We have in place health screenings upon entering our secure facility (temperature and health questions) as well as all of our previously installed procedures (physical distancing, facial coverings, use of PPE when close contact is anticipated, full decontamination procedures if exposed)
- Some calls for service remain low as a reflection of the activity in the community. Traffic violations, motor vehicle crash investigations, and school and college related activities are all down. However, disturbance calls; both public and domestic, as well as larceny and mental health issues are on the rise.
- We continue to respond to complaints about compliance with the Governor's Stay Home – Stay Safe order. Our role is compliance through contact and education. We send an officer to each hotel in our community twice weekly to check compliance at those facilities.
- Colchester currently houses just under 200 people in two hotels placed there under a state voucher system for those needing housing during the pandemic. After several weekends of frequent visits by our officers, the State hired deputy

sheriffs to provide security details at the two hotels in question. CPD remains the primary law enforcement provider for these locations but the “first responder” role played by the sheriffs is greatly appreciated.

- CPD responded to 689 calls for service in April. We issued 29 traffic warnings and 11 tickets. 31 people were issued citations to appear in court for criminal charges

Incidents of note:

16	MV Crash investigations	down 60% from April 2019
40	Traffic violations	down 82% from April 2019
52	Disturbance (public & domestic)	up 38% from April 2019
49	Mental health related	up 20% from April 2019

Town Manager’s office

- Meetings with:
 - Emergency Management Meetings – constant and ongoing, regarding national, state and local response to public health emergency and now related financial issues
 - Department Heads and Public Safety Chiefs weekly vs. traditionally monthly meetings
 - Various virtual meetings regarding the current emergency, unemployment, remote staffing issues and concerns
 - Vermont House Ways and Means Committee regarding education tax payments
- Ongoing / In progress:
 - Daily public communications on changes due to COVID
 - Access easement for Rosetti Natural Area and a former camp road near Thayer Bay Road
 - Efforts to locate a third solar project
 - Work on fire department consolidation
 - Fire Station Condition Assessment
 - Causeway repairs through June 2020
 - Capital Program for FY 21 – 26
 - Lease of space on town antennas for revenue
 - Assisting emergency services with ongoing and special considerations
 - Assessment of significant capital needs that should not be deferred: We need a new ambulance as one is ten years old, lacks modern safety harnesses and the ability for two staff to effectively work on a patient in transport.
- Completed:
 - Town medical monitoring and training program related to COVID
 - Updated departmental operational and cleaning procedures related to COVID
 - Updated Emergency Management Ordinance for new town fire department
 - Advocacy to keep regional parks open
 - Electronic signature use for remote approval of documents by Selectboard
 - Furloughs of 27 or about ½ of Town staff, except for public safety, due to revenue concerns due to COVID-19.