05a

Memo

From the Manager's Office

To: Colchester Selectboard

From: Aaron Frank, Town Manager; Alicia Tebeau-Sherry, Communications Coordinator

Date: May 10, 2024

Re: Changing the Town Offices Hours

Purpose: The purpose of this memo is to announce the changing of the Town Offices' hours from 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. effective June 3. This change allows employees who desire it to reduce their unpaid employee lunch break from one hour to one half-hour, and reduces the hours of operation from nine hours to eight and one-half hours.

Background: Currently, the Town Offices operate from 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. in hopes of offering services shortly before the beginning of the typical work day for some businesses. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the service counters at the Town Offices would often have several customers per day. Since then, the number of visitors to the Town Offices have declined. Town staff prefer to work with customers face-to-face, but the use of online and phone services have increased, as those options are often more accessible for the general public, and as a result, may be a contributing factor to the decreased number of visitors to Town Offices.
In order to observe in-person service trends, we surveyed other towns regarding their hours of operation and tracked the occurrence of customers at each of the four service windows in the Colchester Town Offices (Administration/Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Clerk's Office, and Planning and Zoning). We also sought out input from Department Heads and examined overall workforce trends for more information on the impact of this change.

Findings: Appendix A exhibits the results of the survey of other Chittenden County towns' hours of operation. We are the only Town Office that opens at 7:30 a.m. All other towns from the survey open at 8:00 a.m., or shortly after. Like the Colchester Town Offices, most other towns close their doors at 4:30 p.m. Only one other town has a nine-hour spread of open hours, with the exception of four of their departments, which have reduced hours of operation ranging from four hours to eight and one-half hours.

Appendix B shows the results of our service counter tally sheets. Both the Planning and Zoning Office and Clerk's Office each had more total customers when compared to the Administration/Public Works and Parks and Recreation service counters. The Administration/Public Works service counters appeared to have the greatest number of visitors between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. The Clerk's Office also noted what services customers were coming in for, which appears to be primarily passports or passport photos, but the busiest hours for their counter, for any type of service, spanned from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The Planning and

Zoning counter had a large number of customers, and they remained the busiest from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The Parks and Recreation Office had the least number of visitors, but appear to do the most business before noon.

We also asked Department Heads for input on the anticipated impact to customers. The Clerk's Office noted they do not believe there would be a negative impact, as customers would adjust. They did note that the change in hours may be noticed more when their office gets busy with taxes, but they would make sure payment option awareness is increased and that they could open early for several days during tax season. The Parks and Recreation Office believes that the adjusted hours would work for them, but suggested that 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. would still allow customers to come in before work. The surveys did not indicate this for other counters though, and further, the entire Parks and Recreation department will be moving to the Colchester Recreation Center in the near future. The Planning and Zoning Office, Department of Public Works, and the Manager's Office do not believe there will be a negative impact to the community by changing hours of operation.

Additionally, when looking at workforce trends, in the past, hour breaks were more common within office environments, whereas 30-minute breaks were more common in retail, hospitality, industrial and labor-based positions. However, in more recent times, the trends lean more towards flexibility, often meaning employees have the ability to choose between a shorter or longer break, as long as the employee chooses one and sticks to it to ensure accountability. It is important to note that if an employee prefers the hour break, there would need to be some value-add to the person working 30 minutes during operational closure. However, data shows that the trend has been towards shorter lunch breaks, and presumably, this is due to the trend of valuing a better work/life balance, and a shorter break equates to a more abbreviated schedule. A workplace such as the Town's does offer many benefits for an hour break for interested staff, particularly in the area of wellness, as the proximity to the bike path and the fitness space are convenient and available year-round.

Considerations: Our current hours require employees to take a one-hour unpaid lunch break and allows Town Offices to have a nine-hour spread of open hours to access in-person services. While the public would lose a half-hour of the offices being open by changing the Town Offices hours, it will provide flexibility and add value to employees, and thus to the town as an employer. Becoming more closely aligned to surrounding towns' hours of service, and offering a reduced amount of required unpaid time for employee lunch breaks due to the change in the Town Offices hours, will help make the Town a more competitive employer and improve recruitment efforts and attractiveness.

All departments within the Town Offices would adjust to these new hours in order to maintain consistency in the hours they provide services, and whether staff members arrange to take an hour or half-hour lunch break with this new offering to employees, it will be ensured that service counters are staffed for that span of hours that Town Offices are open. Emergency services would continue to offer 24-hour service.

Appendix A

Burlington City Hall	M-F	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
South Burlington City Hall	M-F	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Essex Town Office	M-F	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
City of Essex Junction Office	M-F	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Williston Town Office	M-F	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Shelburne Town Office	M-F	8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Milton Town Office	M-F	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Winooski Town Office	M-F	8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Appendix B

Counter: DPW / Admin. **Week: 10/2/2023 – 10/6/2023**

Time	Tally (# of Customers)
7:30	
8:00	1
8:30	
9:00	111
9:30	11
10:00	11
10:30	1
11:00	
11:30	11
12:00	1
12:30	1
1:00	1
1:30	
2:00	
2:30	
3:00	111
3:30	
4:00	

Counter: DPW/Admin

Week: 10/9/2023 – 10/13/2023

Time	Tally (# of Customers)
7:30	
8:00	1
8:30	
9:00	
9:30	
10:00	
10:30	
11:00	
11:30	
12:00	
12:30	
1:00	
1:30	
2:00	////
2:30	
3:00	
3:30	//
4:00	/

P- pass/photo T- taxes L- land records V- vital/marriage

N- notary O- other

Counter: Town Clerk **Week: 10/2/2023 – 10/6/2023**

Time	Tally (# of Customers)
7:30	PPO
8:00	PTO
8:30	PN
9:00	LO
9:30	PPVTV
10:00	TTTT
10:30	PTN
11:00	OP
11:30	V T
12:00	OTVP
12:30	T
1:00	VTO
1:30	TTOOL
2:00	OTLTO
2:30	VLTVT
3:00	OTONP
3:30	TPP
4:00	NT

Totals @ counter 83

P- 32

N- 5

T- 22

L- 5

V- 7

O- 12

59

4:30

P- 12 N- 4 T- 20 L- 4 V- 7 O- 12

Counter: Town Clerk **Week: 10/2/2023 – 10/6/2023**

Time	Tally (# of Customers)
7:30	P P
8:00	P P P
8:30	P P P P
9:00	P P N P L
9:30	P
10:00	
10:30	
11:00	P
11:30	
12:00	
12:30	
1:00	
1:30	
2:00	P
2:30	P T P T
3:00	P P
3:30	P
4:00	

4:30

P- 20 N- 1 T- 2 L- 1 V- 0 O- 0 24

Town Clerk's

Counter: **Week: 10/9/2023 – 10/13/2023**

Time	Tally (# of Customers)
7:30	
8:00	P
8:30	L T L T P
9:00	O T N N
9:30	P
10:00	N O O O T L T T
10:30	O T P
11:00	P O L
11:30	T L T P
12:00	T V T
12:30	
1:00	L L L
1:30	T N T N T P T
2:00	N N T L
2:30	T O T P
3:00	
3:30	T T N T N V
4:00	T P

Town Clerk's

Counter: **Week: 10/9/2023 – 10/13/2023**

Time	Tally (# of Customers)
7:30	P
8:00	P
8:30	P P P
9:00	P
9:30	P P P
10:00	T
10:30	
11:00	
11:30	P T
12:00	
12:30	
1:00	
1:30	
2:00	
2:30	P P P D
3:00	D P
3:30	
4:00	

Counter: Planning + Zoning **Week: 10/2/2023 – 10/6/2023**

Time	Tally (# of Customers) Thurs	Fri
7:30	1	
8:00	1111	1
8:30	11	
9:00	11	
9:30	11	
10:00	1111	
10:30	1111	111
11:00	1	
11:30	1	1
12:00	1	11
12:30	11	1
1:00	11	
1:30	11	
2:00	1111	1
2:30	1	
3:00	111	
3:30	11	
4:00	11	11

Counter: Planning + Zoning **Week: 10/9/2023 – 10/13/2023**

Time	Monday	Tues	Tally (# of Customers) Wed	Thurs	Fri
7:30					
8:00	1		1		
8:30				1	
9:00					
9:30	1		1		
10:00			1		1
10:30			1	1	
11:00		1	1	11	
11:30		1	11	1	1
12:00					1
12:30		1	111	1	
1:00	1	1	11	1	
1:30					
2:00		1		1	
2:30			1		
3:00		1			
3:30	1				
4:00	1				

Parks and Recreation

Counter: **Week: 10/9/2023 – 10/13/2023**

Time	10/9-10/13 Tally (# of Customers)	10/16-20/23
7:30		
8:00	1	
8:30	11	
9:00		
9:30		1
10:00		
10:30	1	
11:00		
11:30		
12:00		
12:30		
1:00		
1:30		
2:00		
2:30		
3:00		
3:30		
4:00		