

4/08, the Montpelier City Council suspended all Task Force, Committee, and Advisory Board meetings that are not required by law, through April 22nd.

Wed., Apr. 22nd	City Council Meeting	6:30 PM	Zoom Meeting Meeting ID: 959 1831 1865 Password: 751463 +19292056099,,95918311865# US (New York)
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Public Health and Safety

COVID-19 Response

The impacts of the Coronavirus are still being felt in every aspect of life in our community. The City of Montpelier remains committed and focused supporting our residents, larger community, and employees. We want to share updates on the City's actions to keep residents and employees safe and healthy.

State Updates:

- April 10th 2020:

• Governor Scott announced an extension of the State of Emergency in Vermont, and all existing mitigation orders and closures until May 15th through Addendum 9 to Executive Order 01-20.
- April 10th 2020: The

• Attorney General issued a directive to law enforcement on how to enforce the governor's executive order, emphasizing education and voluntary compliance, while also allowing the Office of the Attorney General to pursue civil and criminal enforcement of the order, including a \$1,000-a-day fine for continued noncompliance.
- April 10th 2020: The

• Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets issued further guidance regarding Farmer's Markets, stating that after further consultation with the Vermont Department of Health (VDH), farmers markets are still not permitted under the terms of the current Stay Home/Stay Safe executive order. Our Farmer's Market is aware, and has set up direct ordering from vendors via their website.
- April 15th, 2020: The

• Commissioner of Health reported that Vermont State Officials are cautiously optimistic that Vermont's mitigation strategies, such as the Governor's Stay Home / Stay Safe order, have had an effect as we see Vermont's cases plateau. They highlighted that this is not the time to let up or loosen these measures, but rather to continue to be vigilant with social distancing measures and other mitigation strategies.

General City Updates:

- New City Policies to Protect Staff and Residents:
 - Guidance created for staff to wear masks during work hours when leaving their assigned work building, when they are present in congregate areas, or when interacting with the public.
- The City is maintaining a list of situational updates and resources for those who may need them on the COVID-19 Response page on the website here: <https://www.montpelier-vt.org/1155/Coronavirus-Response>

- Our DPW Streets team have put up signs reminding folks that social distancing measures need to be adhered to when outside- and that everyone needs to stay 6 feet apart, at minimum!
- As a reminder: the Washington and Northern Orange Counties Regional Response Command Center (WNOC-RRCC) is now open to receive folk’s calls for assistance. If you need any support, they are open 7 days a week from 8am-10pm, and are available at:
 - Call line: 802-477-5160
 - Text line: 802-477-5130
- The Capital Area Neighborhoods (CAN) are still looking for volunteers- and will be distributing a flyer to neighborhoods soon- this will also include contact information for the WNOC-RRCC system.

Additional Building Closures, Program Cancellations, or Changes:

- City Hall is currently locked and closed due to safety concerns due to a lack of personnel in the building.
- As a reminder, all Montpelier Senior Activity Center classes have been cancelled for the spring.
- The Montpelier Senior Activity Center’s FEAST To-Go program on Tuesdays and Fridays will be changing their pick-up times. Pick up for meals will now be from Noon-12:30pm in front of the Senior Center.
- The Recreation Department is taking registration/payment for Summer-camp and other summer programming, but will NOT be cashing checks or depositing payments from residents until determination has been made to continue with summer classes or not. Checks will either be processed, returned, or shredded when the determination is made. The Mountaineers have yet to determine if their summer baseball camps or their summer game season will be cancelled or not.

Budget and Voluntary Furlough Updates:

In order to further close the budget shortfall, the Council approved the voluntary furlough of some City employees. These volunteers have saved the City an additional estimated \$170,000. The divisional breakdown of these furloughed employees is as follows:

Furlough by Department/Division	# of Employees
Clerk	1
Community Services: Recreation	4
Community Services: Senior Center	1
Community Services: Parks	2
Finance	1
Parking	2
Planning	3
DPW: WRRF	3
DPW: Water/Sewer Div.	2
DPW: Streets Div.	8
Total:	27

The City will still be providing health care and other benefits for employees as they are on furlough.

City Committee Updates:

- All City Committee, Advisory Boards, and Task Force meetings (unless required by law) have been suspended through April 22nd. Committees have been asked to let staff know if they need to continue to meet while the

City has a quarter of its staff on furlough. Otherwise, meetings will most likely continue to be suspended to preserve City employee capacity.

City Communications:

- The City is in frequent communication with the WNOC-RRCC group, the CAN groups, and Montpelier Mutual Aid. These groups are continuing to share public messages with the City- which is in turn sharing the information through the City's media channels.

Remember to support your local community businesses, if you are safely able to! There are many options to support our local shops, by buying a gift card, shopping online or by phone, or by ordering take-out or delivery. Updates for what is open can be found through Montpelier Alive: <http://www.montpelieralive.com/515/COVID-19-Updates>. Also, please remember to reach out to your neighbors or folks who may need assistance during this time. We will get through this as we work together!



Responsive and Responsible Government

Reactivation of Montpelier - Wells River Railroad - Public Notice

Vermont Rail Systems (VRS), in collaboration with the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), has been actively engaged in the reactivation of the former Montpelier-Wells River railroad located on the north side of the Winooski River adjacent to Barre Street & Old Country Club Road. The City of Montpelier secured a lease arrangement with VRS & Vtrans to construct the shared use path within a portion of the old railroad right-of-way with the right to cross it.

As a result of the reactivation project which had been anticipated when the lease was executed, temporary disruptions to the shared use path will be necessary to construct various components of the new railroad tracks on 5 separate occasions for the initial work phase through the end of June. Additional shorter term closures will likely be needed for final completion of work extending into the summer months. The rail reactivation will result in two new shared use path crossings, a new signalized crossing of Barre St, construction of a box culvert at the end of Old Country Club Rd, and a reconstructed rail crossing on Rte 2 (East Montpelier Rd). The various shared use path closures, closure duration, purpose, and tentative schedule are:

- Week of April 20th / 5 day closure / construct box culvert end of Old Country Club Rd
- Week of May 4th / 2-3 day closure / construct path crossing end of Old Country Club Rd (temporary crossing surface provided)
- Week of May 18th / 2-3 day closure / construct path crossing within Sabins Pasture (temporary crossing surface provided)
- Week of May 25th / 5 day closure and street traffic impact / construct Barre St rail crossing at Gin Lane (date not confirmed)
- Week of May 18th / 5 day closure / construct Rte 2 (East Montpelier Rd) crossing alterations

All path closures will be limited to short length work zones. As such, the path will remain open from Granite St to the specific work zone. No alternate route or detour will be provided for travel easterly of a work zone with the exception of the Barre St crossing where path access & use may be possible.

Note: an updated schedule will be provided at the end of May to include final completion plans

Also note that the shared use path is still an active, unaccepted project. The contractor had been scheduled to return

earlier this month to address a punch list of incomplete or unacceptable items. This work has been postponed although we may need our contractor undertake some railroad related work at the crossings such as signs and pavement markings, etc. Additional path use disruptions are anticipated.

Reality Check

See article below



Inclusive, Equitable and Engaged Community

Montpelier Senior Activity Center

- **FEAST Updates**
 - "FEAST at Home" senior Meals on Wheels continue to be MSAC's top priority -- delivered by volunteers as weekly bulk frozen deliveries
 - "FEAST To-Go" (hot meals) are available Tuesday and Friday, 12:00-12:30pm, under the tent in front of 58 Barre Street, for a suggested donation (optional) of \$5-10 for those aged 60 and older.
 - **Please call 262-6288** or email feast@montpelier-vt.org to reserve a FEAST To-Go meal or inquire about current eligibility for Meals on Wheels.
 - **FEAST menu and more information are available [here](#).**
- Since city employee furlough decisions were made and MSAC needed to cancel plans to host remote spring classes online, many of our long-time independent contracted instructors have geared up to offer **private, remote classes online**. We encourage the public (of all ages!) to support your own health, learning and socialization AND support our instructors' livelihoods by attending their classes!
- Explore dozens of their private online classes – including Film, Spanish, Yoga, Pilates, Qi Gong, Tai Chi, Movement for Parkinson's, Nutrition/cooking, Meditation, Painting, Drawing, Digital Photography and more: [click here](https://www.montpelier-vt.org/DocumentCenter/View/6812/MSAC-Instructors-teaching-privately-as-of-4_17) for contact information or visit: https://www.montpelier-vt.org/DocumentCenter/View/6812/MSAC-Instructors-teaching-privately-as-of-4_17.
- **The Next Spring Weekend Walk for All Ages with Harris is Saturday, 4/18, 9:00-10:30 am**
 - (Required: Walkers must adhere to Covid-19 social distancing safety regimens of wearing face masks, walking at least six feet apart, and not participating if you have symptoms or have been in contact with someone who does. Subject to amendment if circumstances require)
 - On April 18, Gather at Cumberland Farms on Berlin St. along Route 2. We'll go along and up Berlin St. to some area neighborhoods, down Wheelock St. and then back to the gathering spot. Free and open to the public - all ages welcome. Please RSVP to 223-7399 by Friday, 4/17 at noon to check if there have been any changes in the schedule or destination. Click here for our updated [flyer](#) listing all walks through June 20.
- MSAC continues to welcome proposals for summer/fall programs, which can be directed to jclar@montpelier-vt.org.

In the coming weeks, while unable to host public education events, activities and classes in our facility during the pandemic, **we look forward to promoting many of our partners' webinars and remote programs**, including those we'd planned to host for CVCOA and CVSWMD.



DPW Street & Water/Sewer Divisions:

Our DPW Street Division completed several tasks involving maintenance of our equipment, streets and buildings. The following is a summary of what was completed:

- Cleaned trucks and equipment
- Setup paint trailer
- Cleaned around our city buildings
- Filled in Potholes where necessary
- Street/sidewalk sweeping
- Emergency signboard setup to close on ramp to I-89
- Removed VBox sanders in two trucks, these trucks will be used for summer operations
- Made and installed 5 social distancing awareness signs for placement throughout the city.
- Checked rain list at problem drainage areas around the city.
- Secured guardrail on Hill Street for safe travel

Next week our Street Division will continue working on potholes, street sweeping, drainage issues and infrastructure problems as they arise as well as help other divisions as needed.

Water/Sewer Division focused again this week on the following:

- Sewer pump station checks and maintenance
- CSO checks
- Hydrant Flushing

Next week the focus for water/sewer division is finish hydrant flushing, sewer pump station checks and maintenance and if time allows begin cleaning, sewer lines, catch basins and manhole structures.

WRRF:

This week the underground piping for the new methane flare was completed and the new boilers were tested for startup operations. Septage receiving was shut down for two days while the new sludge conveyors were installed. Next week work will continue on the new dewatering equipment and cleaning of digester #1 will commence.

DON'T FLUSH THAT :

Due to the public health crisis, not only is our city seeing a shortage on toilet paper, but many communities are as well. Department of Public Works would like to remind everyone what should NOT be flushed. Flushing items listed below could cause sewer blockages, in which could cause plugged and overflowing toilets, poorly draining sinks and showers, raw sewage backing up through floor drains, manholes overflowing onto the ground or into nearby surface waters, health hazards and nuisance odors, increases in the City's maintenance costs and costly maintenance and repair bills for YOU.

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Paper towels | • Condoms | • Hypodermic needles |
| • Baby wipes | • Tampons and pads | • Facial tissues |
| • Moist towelettes | • Diapers | • Fats, oils or grease |
| • Cosmetics and cosmetic wipes | • Cat litter | • Clothing or rags |
| • Cloth or paper napkins | • Cigarette butts | • Medications (pills or liquid) |
| • Shop towels | • Dental floss | • Bandages |
| | • Latex gloves | • Cotton balls |

- Food scrapes
- Swiffer pads
- Plastic of any kind



William Fraser
City Manager

Upcoming Agenda Items (TENTATIVE)

4/28 - 4/29	Strategic Planning	5/13	Ordinances Tax Stabilization Strategic Plan COVID-19 Parking Garage	5/27	COVID-19 Ordinances Personnel Plan
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Reality Check

For Montpelier Bridge, April 22, 2020

By William Fraser, City Manager

As this is published, we'll all be at the beginning of our sixth week of stay at home conditions due to the Coronavirus. Like many businesses and individuals, the city government has been hit financially by the shutdown. Last week, the City Council approved measures to address a possible deficit of up to \$500,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30th.

The budget deficit projection was due primarily to a downgraded revenue forecast caused by the Coronavirus shut down. These include foregone parking fees/fines, lost recreation and senior center program fees, reductions in local options tax collections, drops in ambulance revenues because of an immediate decline in call volume, and other permit and license fees. Higher than expected health insurance costs, legal fees and winter salt costs added to the overall budget stress.

The City Council approved a plan which includes furloughing up to 30 City employees until at least June 30th. This resulted in a net cut of \$152,000 in the general fund and \$40,000 in the water/sewer funds. The also proposal cut \$245,416 from budget operating lines. This includes some equipment purchase and project delays, including postponement of a community wide social equity initiative.

These steps leave a projected \$113,000 year end deficit for which staff will continue to seek solutions. The result of these actions means that residents can expect much more basic services from the city for the next two and ½ months.

Operational impacts are as follows:

Committees – On hold, possible work suspension through June 30.

DPW Equipment Division – Fully functional but also assisting Street and W/S divisions.

Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants – Fully Functional

Public Works Streets and Water/Sewer Divisions – limited to street sweeping, patching, basic maintenance, line striping and emergency response.

DPW	The DPW Streets Division staffing has been reduced through the City's Voluntary Furlough Program. will focus on basic/daily tasks such as sweeping streets, setting up the street painting machine, placing cold patch in potholes as they arise and assisting our Water/Sewer Division as needed.
	The Water/Sewer Division spent the week working on Hydrant Flushing, this will continue through the next couple of weeks.

	Stump Dump: Montpelier’s Stump Dump will be open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday between the hours of 8AM – 12 PM to Montpelier residents looking to dispose of yard waste only (brush, leaves, clippings, and small limbs). The Stump Dump will remain closed to all nonresidents, contractors, and deliveries that would typically require a monetary transaction
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Recreation & Senior Center – FEAST Meals program continued. ALL other programs cancelled until June 30th. No Rec/Sr. Center facility maintenance will occur. Program planning for summer, fall and winter severely limited.

Recreation Department	Recreation Department has closed all City fields and playgrounds – at this time, staff is unable to maintain these facilities, and cannot guarantee their sanitization. The City reminds all residents to not gather in groups in our fields and to practice proper social distancing.
	All City-Owned basketball hoops have been dismantled to discourage group gatherings and to promote proper social distancing
	The Recreation Department will continue to accept payment and registration for summer camps- but will not be cashing checks or processing payments until a determination regarding the camp's opening is reached.

Senior Center	Spring Classes have been cancelled. Some instructors will be offering independent classes.
	FEAST Meals remain available. On Tuesdays and Fridays from noon-12:30, FEAST To-Go meals are distributed in front of the Center at 58 Barre Street with safety protocols in place. We appreciate reservations at least a day in advance, but residents can come without a reservation. Anyone can also inquire about FEAST at Home (Meals on Wheels), by calling 262-6288. The suggested donation is \$5-10 for anyone 60 or older, and the fee is \$7 for those under 60 or those who don’t fill out a nutrition survey for the TO GO meals.

Parks – Reduced maintenance staff. Parks will remain open for now.

Parks	Parks remain open, but have issued guidance for interacting with the parks- including staying home if you feel unwell, staying at least 6 ft. apart, bring a face covering, keep dogs leashed.
	Hubbard Park Tower is closed, as it is impossible to maintain a 6 ft. distance while climbing.

Planning & Development –Limited functioning except for basic permit requirements.

Planning	Permitting: Audra Brown (abrown@montpelier-vt.org) will still be the point of contact for all permits but she is limited to 5 hours of work per week. She will issue some permits and forward others to Meredith Crandall for zoning and Chief Bob Gowans for building permits.
	Hearings: We hope to start holding virtual DRB and DRC hearings in May in order for some important projects to continue to be advanced.
	Building Inspections: Chief Bob Gowans (rgowans@montpelier-vt.org) will be covering the building permits and inspections
	Community Development Specialist work is currently on hold while staff is furloughed, and Existing projects will now run through the Director Mike Miller (mmiller@montpelier-vt.org) .

Clerk & Finance – Limited services, basic functions only.

Clerk's Office	Land Records: The online land records system will be available and will always be current to 1 or 2 days out. If it is necessary to review those un-indexed instruments, a staffer will be in the office available to answer questions via phone or email during regular business hours. Assistance with the online system will again be available via phone during regular business hours. Please note that most land records and vital record indexes are available via the online “land records” system, but pre-1993 land records may require a little help from staff.
	Research in the Vault: For historical research or land record research that necessitate the direct review of documents (those prior to 1993), you will need to make an appointment with the City Clerk staff
	Marriage Licenses: Marriage licenses will be available by appointment only. Please contact the Clerk’s office staff during business hours.
	Business Licenses: Suspended until further notice.
	Copies of Vital Records: Requests for Birth and Death certificates should be directed through the Department of Health online system at https://secure.vermont.gov/VSARA/vitalrecords/ . Copies of Marriage Certificates will be available by mail only. Please send a request and a \$10 check (payable to the City of Montpelier) to Montpelier City Clerk, 39 Main Street, Montpelier VT 05602.
	Dog Licenses: Licensing dogs will be suspended until further notice
	Green Mountain Passports: Suspended until further notice.
	Liquor Licenses: All liquor license, catering, and event requests should be submitted by mail or through the drop box.
Scheduling of appointments should be directed to the City Clerk at 802-223-9500, jodum@montpelier-vt.org, or 39 Main Street, Montpelier VT, 05602	

Finance	On March 18, 2020 the City Council voted to delay the 4th installment of Property Taxes for FY2020 from May 15, 2020 to June 15, 2020.
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Manager, Assessor, Justice Center, Cemetery – Mostly functional with delays. City Hall closed.

City Hall	The City Hall Building is currently closed to the public at this time. Please reach out to Jhasmine Lamb jlamb@montpelier-vt.org to schedule a remote meeting as needed.
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Assessor's Office	Property inspections have been postponed for the time being. The Assessor will be in touch by phone with property owners who have projects underway to get status as of April 1st.
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Green Mount Cemetery:	Some Cemetery services have been suspended, including: General landscaping, with limited exceptions, Conducting Cemetery Tours, Funerals that have more than 10 people in the funeral party, and any burials during the 4 day Memorial Day Weekend.
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Police, Fire/EMS, Dispatch – Fully functional.

Fire Department	The Fire Department Building is currently closed to the public.
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Police Department	The Police Department building is currently closed to the public. The Parking Division has been shut down completely.
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Note that some of these programs and projects may be closed or stopped beyond a lifted stay home order because of fiscal restraints.

Parking Garage Update

The City Council is reviewing plans for a revision to the design of the voter approved Parking Garage. The newer design will have a smaller footprint while still containing 345 parking spaces. This proposal was developed to address questions and comments raised by members of the public before and after the bond vote. The goal was to improve the project if possible while still providing the new parking and hotel project in downtown.

Key changes include:

- An improved direct sidewalk and recreation path connection from State Street to the new Recreation path.
- A smaller building footprint so that the new garage is less visible behind Christ Church.

- Larger vehicle/truck turning and maneuvering space in the 60 State Street parking lot.
- Slightly larger path between the hotel and garage, also linking to the new recreation path.
- Flat floor parking (rather than ramped floors). Allows exterior visual improvements and potential future adaptation for other uses if necessary.
- Additional landscaping.

The City Council will be discussing the design revision on May 13th. Design details and information about providing comments can be found at <https://www.montpelier-vt.org/1165/State-Street-Parking-Garage>



Why is an adjusted design for the approved parking garage project being proposed right now? We are in the middle of an unprecedented pandemic and economic shut down, why would we spend millions of dollars building a parking structure?

1 - The garage and hotel projects are in the middle of appeal litigation. The current schedule calls for a trial in the fall, with decision in the winter. If no further appeals are filed, the earliest these projects could begin construction is about this time next year, in 2021. Additional appeal litigation could push this back to 2022.

2 - The decision to proceed with actual construction of these projects will be made based on economic conditions 1-2 years in the future, not now. Large projects like these can be instrumental in providing work for people and revitalizing the downtown after this financial hit.

3 - The parking garage is paid for by tax revenues from the new hotel and parking fees from customers, including the hotels. Paradoxically, a decision by the council or court to stop the project will require Montpelier taxpayers to pay the nearly \$1 Million in design, engineering, permitting and legal expense incurred already. Cost overruns caused by delay and/or litigation could also result in taxpayer expense.

4 - The appeal litigation is at a place where any changes or revisions must soon be submitted. The Council made the appropriate decision a year ago saying that they wanted any design alteration to be reviewed by them openly with an opportunity for public comment and feedback. Given the current difficulties inherent with public meetings, the Council chose to discuss this over a month's time so that the concept could be posted and publicized for all to see.

5- This is not a radical redesign. It retains the key elements of the original garage while making improvements in areas which had received significant public discussion. The goal is to develop the best possible project for all.

6 - The garage project is an integral part of the city's future transportation planning. It will provide parking for the new Transit Center and any future rail use which may occur. The Council has approved a new downtown master plan which incorporates pedestrian and bicycling enhancements throughout. These are accomplished by removing several on street parking spaces. This plan is contingent on structured parking being created.

Renewed public discussion about the garage has resulted in confusion about information which had been addressed before.

- There are 237 parking spaces available in the Capitol Plaza lot (185 spaces) and the Heney Lot (52 spaces total). After the construction of the redesigned parking garage, there will be a total of 414 parking spaces, which combines 55 surface spaces in the Capitol Plaza lot (43 public, 12 reserved), 14 in the Heney Lot and 345 spaces available in the redesigned garage. Thus, there are a total of 177 parking spaces gained as part of the project (414-237). If you take out the 12 reserved spaces for Hilton "premier guests" in the Capitol Plaza surface lot after construction, then we have the same 160 net new (actually 165 but allowing for changes in actual construction) with the redesigned garage as we did with the previous parking garage design.
- The only TIF funding allocated to this project is tax revenue from the new Hotel. Any suggestion that TIF is speculative is incorrect.
- The project budget includes both annual maintenance and capital reserve funding. These amounts were derived from discussions with both parking garage developers and municipal garage operators. This has been asked and answered on numerous occasions
- Projects are never put out to bid before a bond vote. The amount of design and engineering detail required to have a project bid ready is very expensive. No community would expend that much money without certainty that the voters had approved the project.

The current status of the project is that a trial on the zoning appeal is scheduled for fall. A series of court rulings favorable to the city have significantly reduced the number of issues being contested, reduced the number of appellants in the case, and determined that the garage is not

subject to Act 250 jurisdiction.

To date, the city has spent \$785,500 on the garage project. \$603,600 is on design and permitting expenses. \$181,900 in legal costs related to the appeal has been spent. Consultant costs related to the appeal are included in the design total.

These are very scary and uncertain times. Health experts tell us that we will get past this, no one knows exactly when. City officials are, of course, focusing on meeting immediate community needs. It would be irresponsible, however, for us to stop carefully planning for the future.

Please feel free to contact me or your elected officials with questions or comments about the City Government. I can be reached at wfraser@montpelier-vt.org or 802-223-9502. Other city officials' email addresses and phone numbers are available on the web.

Thank you for reading this article and for your interest in Montpelier city government.