



VILLAGE OF BLISSFIELD

PRESS RELEASE

COVID-19 UPDATE & PLAN FORWARD

JUNE 18, 2020

Village Office

To prevent the spread of the COVID-19 Virus the Village of Blissfield closed the office to the public from March 23- May 4, 2020. The Village employees did work on alternate schedules to continue the daily operations; such as answering and returning calls to citizen's, assisting with utility bills, entering payments, etc., while practicing social distancing. May 26th through June 5th the Village Office was open to the public by appointment only on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. As of June 8,2020, we are now back open to the public with shortened hours of 9:00am-12:00pm, and 1:30-4:30pm. This is to give us time to clean and sanitize the building.

COVID-19 requirements we are asking at this time are as follows:

- Face masks/coverings are recommended.
- Please practice social distancing (6 ft.) while inside the office.
- Please do not enter if you have a cough, fever, or shortness of breath.
- The office will be disinfected/sanitized regularly.

Garbage bag tags continue to be available at Borchardt Brothers Market for \$10 a pack of 10.

Utility Bills

We are accepting water/sewer bill payments at this time but it is strongly encouraged to use the drop box on the rear of the Village Office/Police Department building, U.S. mail service, or by phone or online (additional 3% fee applies to phone or online payments).

We would like to remind residents that Village Council did waive late fees for utility bills from March through May. Utility bills are still required to be paid. **Late fees will be applied** to bills that are late as of June 27th.

Parks & Recreation

We will be starting to take shelter reservations starting June 22nd. The Village has received calls from residents inquiring about reservations. We will be calling these individuals back according to date of inquiry to reserve a shelter.

The Village is still working on our summer recreation programming. More information will be provided through the Village Facebook Page and Website.

Public Safety

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent lockdowns, the police department did adjust certain aspects of our operations to ensure the safety of the public and our officers. Those adjustments included:

- Following CDC guidelines, which included the wearing of masks and gloves while in contact with citizens inside buildings.
- Limiting in-person contact between officers and citizens. This was accomplished by contacting complainants over the phone to take police reports and conduct interviews, when the circumstances were appropriate to do so. This was determined on a case by case basis.
- Some non-essential services, such as lock-out assists, were suspended during the first month of the lockdown.
- Additional procedures on cleaning and sanitizing work stations, equipment, and police vehicles.

Public Works

The Village did adjust the operations with our Public Works Department. This was done by staggering staff hours and sanitizing tools and equipment. Our DPW staff worked to maintain our day to day operations and no services were affected.

Library

On June 8, the first day allowed by Executive Order 2020-110, the village library began a phased reopening by providing borrowing in a low-contact manner from the library vestibule. Patrons may call the library and request items or place their requests online. Staff will check the items out, making them available to patrons just inside the front door of the library. Quantity limits will be in place. During this phase the staff will continue to prepare the building, catch up on work made impossible by the building closure, develop and test workable procedures and protocols, and receive training in PPE and infection control.

Shortly after, barring any changes, patrons will be able to enter the library building to choose materials and use computers with occupancy limited to 25% of maximum, according to the terms of EO-110. The order mandates social distancing and masks for all staff and patrons. Time limits will help assure access to all. Some services, programs and materials will remain limited or unavailable, based on relevant and analogous restrictions for restaurants and theaters, as well as advice from the legal and medical community.

Programming will continue online as it has from the beginning of the building closure. Library staff has developed a full slate of online programming for children, teens, adults and families, including the summer reading program, with the continued support of our existing sponsors. Many of the programs feature local businesses. The library has added many new online content providers to its website, which, along with the existing providers, offer downloadable and streaming books, magazines, newspapers, audio books, movies, TV, music, and educational materials. Those without a library card may apply for an online account from the website.

In addition to its development of programming and online content, library staff has kept the building safe and the bills paid, worked to repair and update computers and other technology off-site, and pursued continuing education online to prepare for the changes all will face during and after re-opening. The library has also said goodbye to Assistant Director Susan Harmes, who retired with over 30 years of service, after training her replacement, Autumn Smith, the library's former Youth Services Coordinator, who returns to the library in the new role. The staff all eagerly await the opportunity to greet and assist patrons again.

Downtown Development Authority

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the DDA has amplified the importance of our local businesses to the community. We wanted to make sure that every business received assistance in all aspects of COVID -19 relief.

Blissfield businesses were given a “Covid-19 Playbook”. This playbook included important loan and grant information as well as important website information that they could utilize. We sent emails and information throughout the weeks of closure to share any funding opportunities the businesses could use to help them through while their income was non-existent.

The Blissfield DDA also approved a small grant and mini loan program to assist businesses with rent, utilities, and working capital. To date, these programs have helped a total of 23 businesses and awarded \$56,850 in grants and loans.

Last week, Blissfield DDA matched \$5,000 in gift card sales to place a total of \$10,000 in our local businesses. The gift certificates sold out in under 4 hours.

The board approved street closure for Lane Street to allow businesses to use the space and have their customers feel better about getting out for the first time. There will be picnic tables set up for residents to take their food outside to enjoy.

Moving forward, we will continue to show our businesses the DDA is here to assist them in any way that we can. We want to keep all of the businesses that make Blissfield a great place to shop, dine, and visit, around for many years to come. The DDA will continue to show that we are a great place to do business and hope to grow as well.

The Plan Forward

The Village has worked diligently to maintain contact with residents utilizing email, phone, and the drop box as well as social media to relay information. Over the last four months we have worked to plan for the “New Normal”. The Village will be continuing the Village Hall hours of 9:00am-12:00pm, and 1:30-4:30pm to allow for cleaning and sanitization of the building. This will be our operation until CDC guidelines are revised. We do encourage residents to visit the office when necessary and to follow the following COVID-19 guidelines:

- Face masks/coverings are recommended.
- Please practice social distancing (6 ft.) while inside the office.
- Please do not enter if you have a cough, fever, or shortness of breath.

The Parks have been reopened and are encouraged to be utilized. We will continue to provide continuous updates regarding public events throughout the year via our Social Media accounts, newspaper updates, and the Village website.

The Village will continue to strive and provide quality services to our residents. We will work to provide services with as little alterations as possible. This includes brush pickup, utility services, street maintenance, etc.

Aquatic Center

Many residents have inquired about the new Blissfield Aquatic Center. We have been working with our contractors and staff to make sure that we can provide a season and open as soon as possible. With COVID-19 we did have some delays this year with construction contractors being unable to work. We are currently anticipating a public opening of late July. The Village is still waiting on the final plastering of the pool, training of employees, and final approval from the State of Michigan. Once we receive the final approval from the State of Michigan, we will be able to implement our opening plans. The Village will be working in the meantime to have our operations ready for when the State grants our permit. We will be releasing more information as we get closer to July.



Joe R. Frey
Village Administrator