

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

The questions below are reflective of concerns and thoughts brought to us as a City directly from our community members. If you were not able to participate in our virtual community meeting, check out this document to get important answers to questions you want to know!

Public Safety

Have crime or suicides gone up significantly in BP since COVID-19? **No, crime has decreased, and suicides have not gone up since COVID-19.**

Has there been reported prejudice or racially motivated incidents towards community members of Asian descent? **The city has not received any reports about prejudice or racially motivated incidents towards Asian community members.**

What methods has the city developed to counter such incidents? **There is a statute and an internal policy around racial bias motivated crime enforcement. The City has also been promoting the State's [Discrimination Helpline](#). 1-833-454-0148.**

Can all police officers wear a mask when approaching the public and have a photo on the opposite pocket with their first names written under it? **Police officers are wearing masks when they engage with the public. They wear a name badge with their first initial and last name.**

Preparedness/Response

How many COVID cases are there in BP? How much testing is being done in our city? How many deaths? How many recovered? How do BP statistics compare with other communities/cities within the Twin Cities area? **As of 6/9/2020, there were a total of 9,677 cases of COVID-19 reported in Hennepin County. Of those, 1,055 (10.9%) were reported as residents of Brooklyn Park. There was a total of 635 deaths from COVID-19 reported in Hennepin County. Of those, 32 (5.0%) were reported among residents of Brooklyn Park. Hennepin County Public Health does not receive data on all tests, just positive results. The County has not been reporting data on the number of recoveries as the datasets are not particularly reliable. Brooklyn Park represents about 6.3% of the total Hennepin population, and has 10.9% of total COVID cases in the county and 5.0% of deaths. Brooklyn Park residents are over-represented among cases, but under-represented among deaths.**

Is the fire department prepared to handle widespread emergency calls dealing with heart attacks or chest related emergencies that may or may not be related to COVID? **Overall, pre-hospital emergency medical calls in the region have been down during the COVID-19 crisis. The fire department has not seen a spike in medical-related calls. The department has developed a comprehensive regional response plan in the event additional resources are needed. The fire department works closely with North Memorial Ambulance on monitoring call volume and trends. It is important that people continue to call 911 if they have an emergency; do not delay if someone is experiencing signs and symptoms related to a possible heart attack.**

Does our city have our own pandemic plan? There are a lot of local BP businesses that have resources to help prepare for this type of situation. The city had a comprehensive influenza response plan that was evaluated at the on-set of the COVID-19 crisis. It was quickly determined that COVID-19 was unique in many aspects. While the previous plan provided some guidance, public safety and city leadership began creating plans, policies, and guidelines that were better aligned with COVID-19 based on federal, state, and county health guidelines. Brooklyn Park was the first municipality in Hennepin County to open its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to provide for a centralized and coordinated response to the COVID-19 crisis. We continue to work with county and state agencies.

What do we do if a business is not following the rules for social distancing?

- All Minnesotans are urged to voluntarily comply with this Executive Order. The state is working with local law enforcement and other authorities to support the order. Brooklyn Park has a COVID-19 Business Response Team that works closely with the State (DPS, DLI, MDH, etc.). When we receive a complaint, we typically request a copy of their reopening plan. Here is a link to plan content and safe reopening guidance for businesses: <https://mn.gov/deed/newscenter/covid/safework/safe-reopening/>
- Any worker who believes that their workplace is not following their Plan or is not following CDC or Minnesota Department of Health guidelines is encouraged to attempt to resolve their concerns directly with the business. If the worker is not successful in that attempt, fears retaliation or has suffered retaliation by the business, the worker should contact Minnesota OSHA at 651-284-5050 or OSHA.Compliance@state.mn.us
- Staff tries to be proactive about sharing CDC and MDH guidelines by keeping the City's website updated and sending weekly email to businesses to provide up-to-date resources including safety guidelines for re-opening.

What if we see a large group of people from different families not social distancing in a parking lot or park? (How is the city enforcing social distancing?) Please do not call 911. The current Stay Safe MN guidelines allow for gatherings of up to 25 people, and the governor has asked for people to voluntarily comply with these guidelines.

Business-Related

What safety measures are in place for businesses in Brooklyn Park to keep their customers safe? Staff is working closely with our business community, identifying their needs and connecting them to resources.

- Safe reopening guidance for businesses:
<https://mn.gov/deed/newscenter/covid/safework/safe-reopening/>

Are there any way community-based organizations can get resources, even mini-grants, to help those affected by the virus – the elderly, young, and front line workers? The City distributed about \$30,000 dollars in grant funds to local organizations to assist with those experiencing the effects of COVID-19. The funds went primarily to organizations that provided food and emergency items to a wide variety of individuals including young people, seniors, and low-income individuals.

Can you do more for small businesses that have are seriously affected by COVID-19? Staff is working with Hennepin County staff to determine if there are County level funds that could be

distributed to businesses in Brooklyn Park. Through the small business emergency deferred loan program, the City distributed \$250,000 in loans to 70 Brooklyn Park businesses. Additionally, the City recently entered a contract with ACER and LIBA to provide no cost technical assistance services to businesses which can include locating additional funds and business assistance outside the City. Staff also continuously update the City's COVID-19 Business Resource page for grants, loans, technical support, and other resources as they become available for businesses. <https://www.brooklynpark.org/covid19/covid19-5/>

Other Re-Openings

When will everything open again? Is it the governor who determines when things will open up? The governor is providing direction to the state on when businesses and other activities can reopen and in what capacity.

City Services

What is the percentage of city services that were offered during the closed period as compared to the cost/budget? The only services that were closed for a prolonged period were recreational programming and some DMV services. Currently, we are projecting a negative budget / revenue impact of a roughly \$1.3M.

When will city offices open? Virtually all city services have been available during the COVID pandemic. Currently, all City buildings are open except for full access to City Hall. City Hall's delay in reopening is largely tied to the construction work taking place in the lobby and front desk area. We hope to have City Hall open with some COVID-related precautions starting early- to mid-July. Important to note that in-person DMV services are available by appointment currently, we also have a drop box available for some DMV related transactions.

When will we be able to renew expired vehicle tabs? DVM offices are open all over the state, but in different ways. Vehicle tabs in our office can be renewed through our Drop Box if you have the renewal form from the state. If they do not have the form, they would need to schedule an appointment.

- We are booked for appointments through July 6th and so we are referring customers to the state website [DRIVE.MN.GOV](https://www.drive.mn.gov) to review the locations tab for the most up to date information on offices throughout the state.

When will in-home inspections begin again (ex. For a gas water heater)? There is no definitive date yet for that type of building permit inspection. For critical health and life safety issues inside a home or rental dwelling, staff is now conducting interior inspections using inspector safety protocols (PPE, social distancing, and coordination with the occupant).

Will the city consider hosting more meetings (both Council and commissions) remotely into the future? Are there safety plans in place to resume in person meetings at City Hall once it is ready to go? The City Council plans to start in person council meetings on June 22nd. Commission meetings will initially be virtual, and we assume that moving forward there will be a continuing need for virtual and hybrid virtual/onsite meetings which we will continue to support. Yes, there are safety plans being developed for when the public comes into city hall for council meetings and to conduct other city business.

How is the city preparing for and what are its plans to inform all residents about safe, secure voting procedures for the 2020 elections?

What to expect at the in-person absentee voting office and polling

- Election staff, election judges, and voters are encouraged to follow CDC guidance on social distancing (maintaining six feet of distance between voters) and sanitizer stations will be available. The use of cloth face coverings is strongly encouraged as an additional measure to reduce the risk in public areas. Social distancing must be observed even if face coverings are in use.

Curbside Voting:

- Curbside voting will be available for the in-person early voting and on Election Day for anyone who cannot enter the polling place for any reason, including concerns for their health. Curbside voting allows a voter to vote without leaving their vehicle.
- If you choose curbside voting, two election judges will bring out a ballot to your vehicle. If you need to register or update your registration, they will bring you an application as well. When you are finished voting, election judges will bring your ballot inside for you and put it in the ballot counter.

* **IF YOU ARE SICK**, please consider the mail ballot option, or if it is within 7 days of Election Day, use the Agent Delivery process for voting. Please call the City Clerk at 763-493-8180 for details.

***Early Voting (absentee) Changes for the Primary Election Only**

Due to COVID-19 and expected low voter turnout for the August Primary, we are encouraging residents to vote absentee either in person or by mail.

- In-person absentee voting period for the City of Brooklyn Park will be held from **August 4-10, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.**
 - Location: Community Activity Center, 5600 85th Avenue North.
 - Voters will be using the ballot counter to submit their ballots during this time.
 - The mail-in absentee voting period is from June 26 – August 10.
 - You can apply for an Absentee Ballot in three ways
 - Pick up at City Hall or download from the city's website: www.brooklynpark.org
 - Call 763-493-8119 and have it mailed to you.
 - Apply online on the Secretary of State's website: <https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/other-ways-to-vote>.

Will there be neighborhood annual recycle collection days again this year? The curbside bulky waste collection will be in the east district starting in September. Details are on the webpage at www.brooklynpark.org/recycling-events. Note that this year the Council has established load

limits because the amount of material set out has been growing too fast to be sustainable – the cost of the program has more than doubled in the last five years.

Recreation and Parks

How will you handle Silver Sneakers classes at the CAC and when can they begin? Daytime Senior Fitness classes will begin the week of June 22, outside of the CAC. Six classes will be offered within current MDH guidelines. All participants will need to register for the class(es) they will attend, conduct a self-screening at home before attending class, check in prior to class and verify self-screening. Class sizes will be limited to 24 participants and 1 instructor. Equipment will be checked-out to participants for the session. In case of inclement weather, class will be canceled. We do not recommend that older adults with underlying health conditions, such as an autoimmune disease, heart issues, diabetes or other chronic conditions attend classes.

How will summer programming for children be affected? All summer programs for young people have been impacted by the pandemic in some way. Programs like summer camp and aquatics have been cancelled and others like youth sports and Rec On The Go have been modified to comply with operation guidelines from the MN Department of Health. The Recreation and Parks Department has put together several in-person activities and events designed to keep young people and families active and engaged this summer. Activities will be offered in each neighborhood each week. There will be a new Get Up and Go brochure available on June 18 and another one on July 20. It will be sent out via email, through Gov Delivers, through social media like Facebook and Next Door, and will be posted online at brooklynpark.org.

How will social distancing at Tater Daze work? The 2020 Tater Daze events have been canceled. The City will offer Music on the Lawn at the Community Activity Center on Tuesday, July 14, 21 and August 11 at 7 pm. Social distancing will be required between family groups. All attendees must bring their own chair or blanket. Within current guidelines we can have 250 people at this outdoor offering.

- There will be 3 drive in movies at the Community Activity Center on Thursday, August 6, 27 and Friday, October 2, all with showings at dusk. Families will need to stay in their vehicle. These events will follow the MDH Vehicle Gathering Guidance.

Community Resources

What steps are being taken to improve free internet access in the city, especially in areas with residents who do not have internet access in their homes? The city and its partners worked with Comcast to strive to achieve internet access for students during distance learning. Additionally, Comcast offers very affordable internet access through their Internet Essentials program and the city determined marketing that program was the fastest and most efficient way of serving the most residents, find more details about the program here: <https://www.internetessentials.com/>.

Budget

Many companies across the nation have imposed mandatory pay cuts for their employees. What is the city doing regarding pay cuts for its employees? At this time, no pay cuts have been proposed or discussed for any employees. The City has 5 collective bargaining agreements that

have been settled through 12/31/2021 which would require renegotiation of those contracts to implement pay cuts. There may be 0% increases but not cuts.

How has the pandemic affected city employees and city resources? The pandemic has absolutely had a financial impact to the City. Currently, we are projecting a negative budget / revenue impact of a roughly \$1.3M. Virtually all city services have been available during the COVID pandemic. There has been a range of flexibility in city employee staff working from home, having staggered schedules, and some staff also opting into voluntary leave options. Currently, all City buildings are still open with the exception of full access to City Hall.

Do you expect infrastructure projects like 252, BLRT and the Coon Rapids Dam projects to be delayed further because of budget issues? None of these projects are being delayed because of budget issues.