



EXECUTIVE
DEPARTMENT

CITY OF SOUTH PORTLAND

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PRESS RELEASE

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South Portland Cancels All Public Meetings for At Least Two Weeks

Effective Monday, March 16, South Portland Mayor Katherine Lewis has suspended all meetings of every City board, committee, and commission for at least two weeks (through March 30) due to ongoing concerns with the COVID-19 disease. In addition to canceling existing meetings, any board, committee, or commission is prohibited from calling a new meeting during this time. This ban, which includes the City Council and Planning Board, will be revisited in the coming days and weeks to determine whether or not it will need to be extended into April or beyond. The City currently has 25 active boards, committees, and commissions. This suspension does not apply to the School Board which has separate authority from the City Council.

“Meetings attract a wide variety of participants, including staff, citizens, applicants, and volunteer committee members, some of whom are in at-risk population groups for the novel coronavirus,” said Mayor Lewis. “Canceling these meetings for at least two weeks will mitigate the risk posed to these individuals from the spread of the virus. It also models behavior we hope other businesses and agencies will emulate.”

Mayor Lewis said if there are emergency items that must be considered by the City Council or Planning Board during this time, a decision may be made to hold a special or emergency meeting for those items. In this event, at least 24 hour notice would be provided to the participants and the public, and special arrangements would be made to allow for remote participation by members of the public and, if allowed by the State of Maine under a formal declaration of emergency, remote participation by members of the Council or Planning Board.

“South Portland has been a leader in a number of areas over the years,” said Mayor Lewis. “We are a leader in public participation, and we want to lead by example during this national crisis and limit public interactions and help prevent the further spread of the COVID-19 disease. We do not want to conduct business in a way that limits public participation, as would be likely during this trying time, and we do not want to perpetuate the risk of this disease in our community.”

This decision also follows guidance from federal and state health officials, who recommend avoiding public gatherings of 50 or more people and gatherings of 10 or more people when high-risk individuals may be present.

Residents are encouraged to obtain the latest information from the [Maine CDC](#) and [U.S. Centers for Disease Control](#). We also recommend taking precautionary measures like a person would for cold and the flu. Examples include staying home when you are sick, covering your cough and sneeze (into your arm), and practicing good hand washing with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds. Residents and visitors to South Portland can stay informed of our efforts via the following methods:

Telephone (207) 767-7606 • Fax (207) 767-7629
www.southportland.org

- Visit the [COVID-19 page](#) on our website;
- Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#);
- [Sign up](#) for phone, text, and/or email alerts via the City's CodeRED service (aka Reverse 9-1-1). You can also download the CodeRED mobile app for your phone; and
- Stay tuned to local TV and print media for local, state, and national news regarding COVID-19.

The City of South Portland will continue to work closely with other agencies to provide additional updates and information as it is available and applicable.

For more information, please contact EMA Director/Fire Chief James Wilson at 207-799-3314 or jwilson@southportland.org.