



CITY OF SOUTH PORTLAND

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PRESS RELEASE

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South Portland Issues New Emergency Regulation Requiring Dogs to be Leashed

South Portland City Manager Scott Morelli announced today a new emergency regulation that requires all dogs to be leashed in public places during certain hours. This new regulation, which is based in part on a recommendation from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, will go into effect on Friday, April 17, at 10 a.m.

Currently, under South Portland’s Code of Ordinances, all dogs must be on a leash “while on any public way, public street, public sidewalk, public parking lots, within Mill Creek Park, or on the Greenbelt Walkway.” This requirement remains in effect and dogs must continue to be on a leash at all times in these locations. However, in all other parks, public open spaces, public beaches, or other public spaces, the owner or keeper of a dog currently does not need to leash their dog; they need only have a leash in hand at all times, though the dog must remain under immediate voice control. The new regulation now mandates all dogs to be on a leash between the hours of 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. in the public areas which currently do not require it. In addition, in all public locations at least six feet of distance must be maintained between other people and animals who are outside of the dog owner’s household.

All other City ordinances related to dogs remain in effect. This includes, but is not limited to, a prohibition on dogs being on Willard Beach between the hours of 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. from May 1 through September 30.

“As a dog owner, I understand how important it is to let our pets outside and get their exercise,” said Mr. Morelli. “But I also recognize during this national pandemic that certain steps need to be taken to help better ensure public health and safety, even those that we have to grit our teeth when making. With this in mind, and following the advice I have received from our Police Chief, Animal Control Officer, Parks staff, and U.S. CDC, I have opted to implement this new requirement.”

Morelli noted that the CDC indicates there is no evidence that the coronavirus can be spread from pets to humans, although according to the CDC there have been cases where humans have spread the disease to animals. Morelli added that pets running off-leash can cause humans to have to break the six foot social distancing requirement set forth in an executive order by Governor Janet Mills. This, he said, was the most cause for concern.

“We’ve received complaints about dogs off-leash resulting in owners and park/beach visitors coming closer than the six foot minimum,” said Mr. Morelli. “This new regulation will help prevent these incidents from reoccurring.”

Morelli said the regulations will be in effect until the declaration of emergency is rescinded by the City Council, or earlier if he deems appropriate. He said that otherwise, people seem to be maintaining proper social distancing in public places, including Willard Beach, and so no further restrictions on these locations are being contemplated at this time. Morelli did note that staff would continue to monitor these areas for compliance.

Under South Portland's Code of Ordinances, the City Manager is empowered to make emergency regulations related to the health and safety of the community during a declared emergency. Only the Mayor can declare an emergency, and Mayor Kate Lewis did so on March 24, 2020. In order for this declaration to be in effect for more than five days, the City Council must vote to extend it. Council did this on March 24, 2020. It is up to them to determine when such a declaration shall be terminated.

For More Information

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:

- 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 or City Manager Scott Morelli at 207-767-7606 or smorelli@southportland.org.