

## **Brooks Free Library Plan for Phased Resumption of Services to the Public**

Note: This is a working document. It provides a framework for library operations and services during the COVID19 pandemic. It will be modified periodically in response to operational conditions, directives from public health authorities and guidance from the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners.

UPDATED 5.26.2020

Brooks Free Library will not resume in-person services to the public or the exchange of library materials to, from and between patrons until authorized to do so by the Health Director and Interim Town Administrator for the Town of Harwich. Resumption of services will be predicated on the availability of cleaning and disinfection supplies, increased frequency of cleaning of high touch services, and the availability of personal protective equipment such as gloves and masks for staff members. Work environment and procedures to comply with directives of the Health Director as well as guidance and directives from the Governor, Massachusetts Dept of Public Health (MDPH), Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC), Center for Disease Control (CDC) and federal Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which has taken a lead role in advising libraries regarding safe practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The safety of patrons and staff members during this pandemic is our top priority so we have implemented special handling procedures for returned materials during this pandemic. Following guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the federal Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), New England Document Conservation Center and the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners, Brooks Free Library will quarantine all returned and incoming materials for at least 72 hours before they're handled by staff, checked in and made available to the next patron. Time is considered to be the most effective disinfectant. Once the quarantine period passes, no further disinfection is needed. This isolation period may be adjusted as updated guidance is received from the CDC, IMLS and MBLC.

### **SUMMARY OF PROJECTED PHASES**

- Current phase

Library closed to the public. No exchange of materials. Staff members working in the building and remotely. Not accepting donations of books and other library materials. The Friends of Brooks Free Library "Books on Wheels" homebound delivery service is suspended. Electronic resources, staff created and staff curated online content and online meetings of book groups, Knit Lit, story times and other online programs are being provided to patrons. VITAL instruction continues remotely.

- Contactless Curbside Pickup

- Building re-opens for limited access and services
- Initially Limited Access to Patrons – Closed Stacks – Limited Wired Internet Stations
- Progresses to expanded access to stacks, areas of buildings, smaller programs may resume
- Normal operations. No restrictions on exchange of materials or gatherings. Social distancing not required.

## **BACKGROUND**

Per the direction of the Town of the Harwich the Library stopped providing in-person access to the public and ceased loaning and providing materials to the public at the close of business on March 13, 2020 due to the Novel Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. Other libraries in CLAMS and across the state closed over the next few days. The Mass. Library System suspended it's inter-library loan delivery service on March 17, 2020. No fines are being charged to patrons for overdue materials. The expiration dates of library cards and of hold on items have been extended. Items currently on hold for patrons will be waiting for them when the circulation of library materials resumes.

The Library stopped accepting donations of books, movies and other materials from the public at the close of business on March 13, 2020. The Friends of Brooks Free Library suspended their book sale operations and their homebound delivery program, Books on Wheels.

The Library Director and union staff members have continued to be paid. Substitute Library Assistants are not being paid as they did not have regular scheduled shifts.

## **Current Phase**

Staff members initially worked in the building after the closure, then worked rotational shifts of minimum staffing in the building and the remainder of the time staff members worked remotely. The Town directed all employees to work from home for several weeks during "Peak Weeks" in April. Rotational shifts of minimum staffing then resumed and on May 11<sup>th</sup> all Town employees were directed to return to work in Town buildings. Masks or face coverings must be worn when in shared spaces in the building. Since staff members do not have separate offices, staff members are wearing masks and face coverings when in the building. Disposable gloves are available for staff to use when appropriate. Staff members share workstations so upon the return to the building we have set up new work stations in what would normally be public areas of the building.

The Director, Assistant Director and Executive Assistant continued to perform administrative, financial, personnel, planning and other functions while working onsite and remotely. Use of GSuite applications available through our CLAMS

email (Gmail) accounts provide access to word processing, spreadsheets, online file sharing and more, which has enabled staff members to easily work remotely and communicate and collaborate. Sufficient remote access to MUNIS and Sierra ensured essential functions could be completed. We have used Google Meet for regular Friday all-staff meetings and frequent online meetings of working groups or staff members collaborating on creating online content and on assigned projects.

The management team continues to research and lead planning efforts for the resumption of full library services and all permanent staff members have been actively engaged in developing this plan. It is understood the plan will be modified and adapted in response to conditions and operating needs as the plan is implemented.

#### In-Library assignments while closed to the public:

Staff members working in the building perform tasks such shelving and shifting materials, shelf-reading, inventorying, withdrawing, working on clean-up projects on the patron and bibliographic database, cataloging, acquisitions, serials and other technical service functions, maintaining technology hardware and software and preparing for future phases of operation.

Staff members using shared workstations have been assigned a personal keyboard to use during their shift. Using gloves will minimize the need to disinfect their workspace or keyboard during their shift.

#### Functions Performed in the Library and Remotely While Closed to the Public:

Whether working in the building or remotely, staff members continue to provide services to patrons such as responding to telephone messages and emails, creating accounts for new patrons, resolving issues with patron accounts, and providing reference services, technology assistance, and reader's advisory services.

The Library has continued to provide information to the public, sharing guidance from the Town, State and federal government regarding the COVID19 emergency, public health and financial and other assistance programs online through our website and social media accounts.

We continue to promote the availability of electronic and online resources for patrons and provide online assistance, including posting staff-created instructional videos.

Book talks, story-times, book discussion groups and other groups have been moved online and now regularly taking place. A new online book group and other educational online programs have been created and others are being developed.

Training in assistive technology continues as does information and referral work and preparation of curriculum for our VITAL program for patrons with sight loss.

Staff members provide support for local teachers in developing their curriculum for online learning programs.

Social media posts and videos have been created by staff members to fulfill the need for technology assistance since we are unable to offer in-person Book-a-Librarian appointments.

A Self Help series of social media posts, videos, resources and online activities has been created.

Librarians responsible for collection development continue to review newly released titles and make selections of books, movies, audiobooks and other materials to add to the collection.

Clean-up projects on the patron database and bibliographic database can also be done remotely by some staff members.

Staff members are assigned professional development work - reading, researching and watching webinars to improve their knowledge and skills in a wide variety of areas and to help plan and prepare for resumption of services during a pandemic.

#### Other operational notes in this phase:

Donations of library materials are not being accepted.

Delivery of mail and packages continues.

The Mass. Library System's inter-library loan service remains suspended.

Access to eBooks, downloadable audiobooks, online magazines and movies and other electronic resources has been expanded since the Library had ceased loaning physical items in March.

Wireless Internet access is available 24/7 from outside of the Library. The Library has 4 access points located in different areas of the building so patrons do not need to congregate in one location to get a good signal. Exterior tables and chairs are arranged to encourage social distancing.

#### Handling of Returned Materials

We have permission from the Health Director to keep the Book Drop open to accept return of materials that had been checked out before the closure. Staff members followed the traditional process of emptying the book return bins in the Book Drop Room by picking up and transferring individual books, DVDs, audiobooks and other materials from the book return bins on to book carts. The

book carts were then placed in an isolation area for 72 hours before the items were checked in. The Book Drop was closed when all Town staff were directed to work remotely during “Peak Weeks” in April.

While closed for “Peak Weeks” we determined we needed to change our Book Drop procedure. Additional book return bins were needed to eliminate the need for staff members to handle individual items when emptying the Book Drop. True Book Return Bins have depressable floors to prevent damage to items dropping into the bin. Depressable floors also make it easier for staff to empty since they don’t have to reach down several feet into the bin to retrieve small items at the bottom of the bin. True book return bins are extremely expensive, however, even with the available group purchasing discounts and options available to us. We researched non-traditional options and purchased 6 commercial laundry carts for a fraction of those cost. These bins will enable staff members to wheel the full bin from the Book Drop Room to the quarantine area without having to individually handle the items. The bins arrived on May 22 and we re-opened the Book Drop on May 26.

Current Procedures:

- All items will be returned using the Book Drop.
- The normal procedure of manually transferring books, audiobooks, DVDs and other library materials from the return bins to a book cart will be eliminated during the COVID-19 emergency.
- Additional rolling book return bins will be procured so returned items can be left in the bin when moved to the isolation area in the Meeting Room.
- Bins will be labeled with date they were removed from the book drop room.
- When at least 72 hours (3 days) have passed staff members will bring the bin to a workstation where the items can be checked in. Note: As described in the introduction, the time period of isolation may be changed based on guidance from the MBLC and IMLS.
- Following this isolation procedure will eliminate the need to individually disinfect each item.

**Limited Resumption of Circulation of Materials (aka “Curbside Pickup”)**

- This is a more labor intensive process than normal operations and it is expected more staff hours will be required to provide this service.
- The number of staff members working at the same time will be limited and there may be multiple shifts per day.
- Returned materials will continue to be processed as described above.

- When the inter-library loan delivery service resumes, incoming bins of items will be quarantined for 72 hours before processing.
- Library hours will be limited enough to enable staff to accomplish tasks and to ensure congestion is not created by patrons picking up items.
- Initial hours will contain a mix of morning, afternoon, evening and Saturday sessions over fewer number of days per week. (Note: To be determined but one example would be initial hours of Tues. 10-1, Wed. 4 to 7, Thurs. 10 -1 and Sat. 10-1.)
- As experience in operating contactless curbside pick-up is gained and operations and staffing needs are evaluated, additional hours of contactless curbside pickup may be added.
- Patrons may place holds online or contact the Library by phone to place requests. Staff members will utilize readers' advisory skills to help those who do not have specific titles in mind to request.
- Selection of materials may initially be limited to Brooks Free Library items until the Mass. Library System inter-library loan delivery service resumes.
- Staff members will follow guidance from the CLAMS consortium regarding clearing of backlogs caused by the shutdown of libraries and the delivery system, filling holds and sending items in delivery.
- Staff working during pick-up hours and before or after will collect items, assemble packages, checking materials out to patrons and stage the packages in the lobby.

Notes: Specific procedures for accepting, tracking requests from acceptance through check-out and pick-up be developed by a working group of staff members.

The length of time the Library remains in contactless curbside pickup phase will be determined by conditions in the community and our ability to handle the volume of activity. It is likely the Library could remain in curbside pick-up phase for weeks or months.

#### Curbside Pickup Procedures:

- Staff members will retrieve the items to fulfill patrons' requests.
- Staff members will contact the patrons to schedule a time window to pick up materials.
- The Library will schedule half hour time windows where patrons will be assigned to pick up their materials.

For example: 10 – 10:30 11 – 11:30 12 – 12:30

Note: The number of patrons per time period to be determined by staff working group, to be adjusted based on experience operating curbside pickup.

- Items will then be checked out to the patron, bagged and tagged/labeled and pre-staged for pickup window sessions
- Prior to the start of the pickup window session staff members will place the packages for the upcoming session outside (specific method of tables or books carts to be determined.)
- Staff members will be available to direct patrons but the pickup service will be self-service. Patrons will exit their vehicles, enter the pickup area and collect their bag.
- Pickup is expected to be a quick process but if a line develops patrons will waiting in designated spots that provide appropriate amount of distance.
- At the end of the session, staff members would collect any packages not yet picked up and put the next session's materials out.

Other services during this phase:

Summer Reading Program

- We will not be able to hold any of the traditional Summer Reading Program group presentations or activities this year.
- The reading portion of the program can continue, though care will need to be taken to arrange things so that multiple children and families are not queueing up to obtain their prizes.

NOTE: Staff working group to develop procedures for Summer Reading Program

BARD program:

- Staff members will resume downloading BARD audiobooks onto cartridges for patrons with sight loss at the start of this phase.
- Patrons and family members/friends will come to the Library to pick up the cartridges following the same procedures for other contactless curbside pick-up.

Homebound delivery

- The Friends of Brooks Free Library may resume the Books on Wheels homebound delivery service when the Library moves to Curbside pickup, however, the start date is entirely up to the Friends and will depend on the availability of volunteer delivery drivers.
- The Books on Wheels coordinators will come in to collect and organize materials for delivery, following the same procedures for curbside delivery.
- The cloth bags normally used for this program will not be used at this time.

- Pick-up by the volunteer drivers will be arranged in the same manner as curbside pick-up.
- The Books on Wheels volunteers will collect materials being returned from program participants. The cart of returned items will be handled in the same manner as other returned materials, i.e., they will be isolated in the Meeting Room for at least 72 hours before being checked in.

Book Sale:

The Friends of Brooks Free Library book sale will remain closed.

Donations of Library Materials:

The Library will continue to advertise to residents that we cannot accept donations of books and other materials at this time.

Tax Forms

- Tax forms are always heavily in demand in the weeks and months leading up to the filing deadline and we anticipate this year will be no different.
- Patrons may call or email with requests for particular forms. If print copies are available the request will be handled like any other curbside pickup.
- We cannot absorb the cost of printing forms or instruction booklets.
- If copies are not available patrons will be provided the contact information and websites of the Internal Revenue Service and Mass. Dept. of Revenue so they can request the forms they need. (This info is already on our website.)

Wireless Internet access - will continue.

Loans of Library laptops and devices:

- The Library will resume loaning Chromebooks, laptops and other devices to patrons for patrons to use at home or outside the building when procedures and supplies are in place to safely do so.
- Staff work group to evaluate options and develop written procedure for circulation and disinfection of devices.
- Appointments to check out devices would be scheduled following the same time periods for curbside pickup of other items.
- Patrons will return devices in-person, not through the Book Drop.
- Set procedure/good instruction sheet to provide quick orientation/how to use device basics for patrons not familiar with Chromebooks

Printing and Fax Service - Will not be available during this phase.



## **Limited in-house access/closed stacks**

Patrons may come in to the central area (“Circ lobby”) of the 1st floor for in-house check-out of materials. The stacks will be closed.

### Sessions of Access

To control the length of time patrons stay the same time session windows as Curbside Pickup will be utilized.

For example: 10 – 10:30, not open to patrons 10:30 – 11  
11 – 11:30, not open to patrons 11:30 -12  
12 - 12:30, not open to patrons 12:30 to 1

- 30 or 45 minute sessions will be considered
  - The half hour in between sessions provides time to ensure all patrons have left (normally it may be 5-10 minute after “closing” before all patrons have exited)
  - Provide some hours for scheduled contactless curbside pick-up for vulnerable patrons
  - Initial open hours per day may be limited but as hours are expanded the Library will consider a longer mid-day session full hour closure to allow disinfection of high touch surfaces.

### Requirements and Procedures:

- The number of patrons permitted in the building to be based on the guidance and direction of the Health Director.
- Hanging acrylic panels will be installed to protect staff at public desks.
- All returns to be placed by patrons into the exterior Book Drop. Returned materials will not be accepted at the Circulation Desk.
- Self Pick-up of Holds will be discontinued to provide more separation between staff members working behind the Circulation Desk and in Circulation area.
- Stanchions, caution tape, signage or other methods will be used to limit access to other areas of the building.
- The “registration desk” will be moved to block aisle going to Youth Services and Youth Services staff will provide services from that desk.
- The elevator will be locked to the lobby and 1<sup>st</sup> floor, preventing patrons from accessing the basement, Mezzanine and 2nd floor. The central stairwell door leading down to the basement will be locked.

- Patrons will be required to wear a mask or face covering while in the building and while waiting in line to enter.
- Hand sanitizer stations to be provided by the Town.
- Limited hours will continue, to be expanded as conditions warrant.
- No seating will be provided. Patrons may only conduct business and leave.
- Restrooms will not be available for the public.
- Newspapers will not be available during this phase.
- Patrons may request and check out magazines.
- To prevent congregating only one OPAC will be available from the first floor OPAC station.
- If possible the second OPAC may be relocated to another area of the Circulation lobby.
- Vinyl keyboard covers needed for OPACs and Self Check stations. To be swapped out during the day and disinfected.
- The Library will not be able to move to Phase 4 until sufficient daily custodial service is provided. Custodian to clean and disinfect before opening and at the end of their shift (likely to be mid-day if current custodial schedule is maintained).
- Protocol to be determined for disinfection of high touch surfaces will be based on guidance from the Town Health Director for custodians with library staff supplementing daily and mid-day disinfection by a custodian.
- No in-person programming of any kind, including small group assistance or instruction, will occur in this phase.
- Staff members may attempt to provide assistance to patrons with their devices if able to do so while maintaining social distance. Staff members may not touch patron's devices.
- Staff members and patrons to remain at least 6 feet apart at all times.
- Some type of temporary low-cost self-installed partition/privacy fencing or screening requested by staff to create a barrier around staff picnic table to create a separate area where they can eat lunch. (Note: not fully enclosed fence – but barrier that signs can be hung on designating it as Reserved for Staff)
- Patrons may not to come to the Library if they are not feeling well. This expectation will be publicized on the website, social media, and through the use of signage. Patrons who display signs of illness will be told they

need to leave. If medical attention is necessary or they are waiting for a ride home the patron should be isolated from others. This may be outside the building during warmer months or if that is not an option the Meeting Room will be utilized to isolate the patron.

### Access to Technology

Some method of providing access to technology for community members using wired public work stations, limiting the number of patrons and ensuring they are physically separated. Note: Staff work group to evaluate options, recommend method of providing access and developing procedures. Procedures to be determined and will be based on ability to purchase supplies and equipment and to disinfect keyboards between use.

Options for in-house use of technology:

Create an area for in-house use of Chromebooks or Useful stations on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor while maintaining appropriate distance, or allow 1 or 2 patrons at a time to have scheduled use of Useful stations on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

Require sign-ups to schedule use.

Vinyl keyboard covers needed or other options for ensuring use of keyboards is provided safely.

No fax services during this phase.

### **Expanding access, programs and services**

Various stages will be needed to gradually resume allowing access to all areas of the building, to allow patrons to stay for increasing periods of time, to expand access to technology, resume in-person technology assistance, in-person Reference services. It is expected that programming will begin with one-on-one assistance and small group programs and progress from there.

The timeline for resumption of services and programs cannot be determined months in advance. Plans will take into consideration conditions in the community as well as staff's ability to handle the volume of activity, monitor patron compliance with public health requirements and library procedures designed to ensure the health and safety of patrons and staff. It will also depend heavily on the Town's ability to provide sufficient cleaning and disinfection services. We will look to public health authorities, the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners and the Mass. Library System for guidance as well as review and evaluate the experience of other libraries in designing safe methods of providing services.

### **Normal operations - restrictions lifted**