

NORTH TONAWANDA
Dept. of Youth, Recreation, Parks & Seniors

500 Wheatfield Street
North Tonawanda, NY 14120
Phone: (716) 695-8520
Fax: (716) 695-8533



www.ntparksrec.com

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DEPARTMENT UPDATE TO THE PUBLIC

These are most certainly unprecedented times for our city, state and nation. This written address comes at the heels of Governor Cuomo's workforce reduction to 100% for non-essential businesses and organizations.

As the Director of our Parks & Recreation Department there are many things to consider in light of this pandemic and its impact on our community. I have found myself wrestling with how to weigh the importance and prioritization of the health and well-being of our workforce against the absolute necessity of some services we need to provide which contribute or impact the health and well-being of our community.

Though Parks & Recreation to some is cast off as a non-essential department (and unfortunately often the first to feel the brunt of budget cuts), there are many essential services that our department provides. Recreation and exercise opportunities play key roles in not only the physical stability of an individual, but factors in to an individual's mental and emotional well-being. This is understood by many, and a key reason during these times we see people utilizing our park areas for walking, bike riding, etc. With the weather clearing up, it won't be long before boaters and kayakers will have the desire to get out on the water, golfers the itch to get out on the golf course, and children the craving to get playing on our playground equipment.

At this time, our staff will only be reporting to conduct what is determined to be essential work. That term, as listed by the governor, has some vagueness to it and can be interpreted very differently from one person to the next. Our City leadership has given me the authority to determine what is essential in regards to our department and the services we provide. At this time, ensuring our parks and public spaces are safe is our main focus. This includes removing and cleaning up all debris while also providing any necessary immediate maintenance to address impacts that would be considered hazardous for public use. Continuing our senior shopping program which provides transportation and shopping aid to the most vulnerable in our community is another essential service that we will continue to provide at this time.

In reduction of workforce, it is imperative that everyone understand it will be impossible for our public spaces and facilities to meet our department standards or your personal standards currently. There are hundreds of hours of preparatory work and maintenance that go in to having our parks, golf course, facilities and programs operating at acceptable standards. Much of those hours will be lost due to the current situation we all find ourselves in. It is my hope that you understand this, and come to the realization that there will be a considerable turnaround time to get things back to normal after this all blows over.

Additionally, it is difficult for our team to make an efficient plan or provide details regarding long-term status of our programs, facilities, etc when we simply have no idea how long it will be before our city, state and nation can return to some sort of normalcy. Many calls and emails have flooded our office in regards to when the golf course will be open, whether we will be offering reduced season pass rates, how will leagues be impacted, whether or not our spring and summer programs and sports leagues will be canceled or delayed, whether or not parties booked at our park pavilions will be canceled, etc.

Please understand while these are all valid concerns and questions, at this time our department is not in the position to make decisions outside the scope of what we know. There currently is no timetable for when the COVID-19 pandemic will come to a close, and therefore it's our philosophy to take things one week at a time. At this time our Golf Course will remain closed, as well as our Senior Center, Youth Center and Recreation Office until further notice. As we have a more firm grip on the exact timetable for this pandemic, we will be sure to reach out to all individuals with facility reservations, program and league registrations, etc. and communicate exactly how you will be impacted as well as what refunds, reimbursements etc. will be provided.

Continue to follow us as we will keep all updated with announcements posted to our webpage, and social media accounts on a weekly basis, highlighting the status of all leagues, programs, reservations etc. Thank you for your understanding and God bless!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Domaradzki', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alex Domaradzki

Director

695-8520 x5500

alexdomaradzki@northtonawanda.org