

**Pittsford Neighbors – “From the Supervisor” column – May, 2020 issue  
Submitted by Pittsford Town Supervisor Bill Smith**

**Town Hall, Staff and Residents Rise to the COVID-19 Challenge**

I write this column in mid-April, in the full swing of our “new normal” brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the crisis emerged in mid-March, the Town Administration acted immediately to keep residents and Town staff safe from potential illness. We put into place new procedures for Town personnel that included heightened facility cleaning protocols, mandating regular handwashing, use of hand sanitizer and sanitary gloves, refraining from sharing work areas and phones, refraining from touching the face, eyes and mouth, and hygienic practices with regard to sneezing, coughing and the like. All critical to stemming the spread of the virus.

The response at all levels of government evolved quite rapidly. Just days after the Town put into place its first round of emergency measures, we followed recommendations from the Monroe County Department of Public Health and the Governor by closing to the public all Town facilities. Most Town operations and services continued uninterrupted. All employees who could work remotely we sent to do so. Employees doing work deemed essential by the Governor and that could only be done on-site, at Town facilities and in the field, carried on with their work, now in accordance with health and social distancing protocols.

We've made special provision for Town employees, with a “Pandemic Time Bank.” People sick with the virus, or confined because of exposure to it, or home to care for children because the schools are closed can use this paid time without burning up sick time or vacation time. As of this writing, no Town employees have contracted the virus or are confined because of confirmed exposure to it.

Town staff members have reached out to the community as well, organizing and facilitating distribution of hand sanitizer, reusable shopping bags and face masks to Pittsford's senior living centers, individual senior residents and to the Pittsford Food Cupboard. Outreach such as this continues every day.

Town Hall is handling business online and by mail, phone, email and the “drop slot” by the front door. All operations of the Highway Department, the Sewer Department and the Parks Department continue. We dispersed these employees into small work crews consisting of people who had been working in close proximity with one another before the crisis hit. Each crew is headquartered separately, working out of its own location where it does not come into contact with other crews.

With crisis comes at least some opportunity. Traffic is greatly reduced for the time being. So is the cost of petroleum products like asphalt, which we use to repave and repair roads. I've taken advantage of both by accelerating and stepping up road repair work around Town. With most of us at home, and road repair costs down, Pittsford's crews are out improving our roads and residential streets.

To enforce social distancing guidelines in parks I've redeployed some Town staffers as Park Wardens. The Town's playing fields are closed because of the State ban on group sports, but Pittsford's 80 miles of trails remain open. Please remember that social distancing applies when using the trails, as well as anywhere.

The Town's code compliance officers are still on top of things, ensuring among their other duties that construction permitted by State COVID-19 guidelines is done safely.

We cancelled the new property assessments announced just before the pandemic struck.

Neither the Town Assessor nor I felt we could have confidence in valuations of property completed just before the crisis hit, and before we could gain a reliable understanding of how the lockdown would affect property values in the long-term or short.

I suspended restrictions on parking RV's in residential driveways. Not just health care providers, but grocery store workers, restaurant staff and others whose work brings them into contact with the public wanted to stay in their RV's, close to their families but not so close as to bring harm into the house. We owe all of them that much courtesy, at least.

Although the Library and the Community Center buildings had to close, their staffs continued to reach out to residents. They continue to do so. Daily calls to check on our senior program participants. Email and social media posts with games, contests, story times and more. Creative approaches to expanding information and resources available online. As with our Town Hall and Public Works staff, a helpful and informative voice on the other end of the phone, answering questions and providing current information about program and service updates is what we owe, as our duty to Pittsford's residents. Of course this represents nothing new for us. We've just adapted and figured out how to do it in a different way.

**Across all Town departments, our staff members have a deep commitment to our residents. They've risen to a unique challenge, serving our residents with the highest level of care, consideration and professionalism. By this I'm delighted but not one bit surprised. My sincere thanks to them all.**

**Nor am I surprised at how Pittsford residents have met the moment. You've done so with creativity, compassion and generosity. Just a few examples:**

- **Members of Pittsford's Chinese-American community organized collection and donation of approximately 2,600 medical masks** to Pittsford senior living communities, health care providers and first responders. The donation packages included writings and pictures by the youngest members of the volunteer group, expressing love and support for all those in need of the masks. Town staff organized distribution of the masks and joined the volunteers in delivering them.
- **St. John Fisher College offered residential accommodation to healthcare workers** from Rochester Regional Health who are well, but who want to avoid going home between shifts because they have compromised people at home.
- Pittsford Mendon High School junior **Katherine Huang and her sister Cailey**, a seventh-grader at Barker Road Middle School, created and distributed **social media public safety promotional images designed to inspire young people** to get serious about COVID-19 and to help everyone stay safe.
- Many individuals and groups have collected generous **donations for the Pittsford Food Cupboard**.
- Over 200 submissions were made to the **School District's online Student Virtual Art Show** and plenty of supportive comments were added from those who viewed it.
- Pittsford teen **Maddee LeClair** has been taking materials donations and orders for the **cloth masks she makes and distributes herself** via her Facebook group Maddee's Masks.
- Pittsford students, working with the Pittsford PTSA, organized a **lawn sign fund raiser** – signs to show support for graduating seniors and dollars to support Pittsford Youth Services and other

regional charities benefitting children and youth – Rochester Kids, St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center and the Children's Institute.

If there's any more inspired and inspiring example of duty and public service than that shown every day by members of our **Pittsford District Teachers Association** and by our **Pittsford Central School District** – I don't know what it is. Once more to no one's surprise, both have risen to the occasion in the face of challenges we can only regard as hair-raising. Nothing distracts them from their primary goal of putting students first. As ever, they find their way to the goal. Let's never take for granted how uniquely lucky we are to be the beneficiaries of such teachers and of such a school district.

Overall, the situation remains very fluid. How we stand in May, June and beyond will depend on the spread of the virus or its containment. Please observe the social distancing protocols, indoors and out. Across our society, that more than anything else will determine how long we remain in lockdown.

You can follow the Facebook pages of our Pittsford Community Library and our Pittsford Recreation department for resources for adults, kids and families to learn and have some fun during the lockdown. Visit the Town website for information about upcoming Town meetings, and for COVID-19 response updates. I'll keep you posted on my *Bill Smith Pittsford Town Supervisor* Facebook page. And if you haven't done so yet, please consider subscribing to our once a week eNewsletter. It provides timely Town information and emergency updates. It is used for Town business only and your email address is never shared for other purposes.

As ever, should you have any comments or questions, you may reach me directly by phone at 248-6220 or by email at [wsmith@townofpittsford.org](mailto:wsmith@townofpittsford.org). I answer my own phone and am always interested to know what matters most to you as a resident.

As you read this, undoubtedly the pandemic's repercussions will be with us yet. Take care and watch out for each other.

We're dealing with a situation such as the civilian population of the United States hasn't experienced since World War II. We'll get through it together. We'll emerge stronger.

Wash your hands.

Stay home.

Stay well.