



TOWN OF WAITSFIELD

Memorandum

TO: The members of the Waitsfield Selectboard

FROM: Trevor M. Lashua, Town Administrator

DATE: April 17, 2020

RE: Access to the Waitsfield Town Office for land records and title searches through the end of the “stay home” executive order [REVISED¹ – 04/20/20].

The following draft protocol is Town staff’s suggestion for allowing for a partial re-opening of the Town Offices for land records research and title searches.

An addendum issued 4/17 to the governor’s executive order to, “stay safe, stay home,” upended a policy that had been in development and limited access to narrow, necessary circumstances. The revised protocol relies on two staff members – the Town Treasurer and Town Administrator – to perform access-related duties in addition to their own, and to amend their hours of work to accommodate. The Town Clerk, who has handled most of the requests for remote document access, will be unavailable for undetermined period of time (for a non-COVID-19 family matter).

The addendum allows (but does not mandate) land records research and title search operations to resume provided that no more than two persons are present at one time. If two employees are present when the access window opens, an employee will have to vacate the offices prior to the first appointment to comply with the governor’s directive.

The Town continues to provide online access through an AxisGIS program to tax maps, assessor cards, and so on.

Appointments will be recorded in a, “Google doc” shared by staff.²

The proposed protocol is:

- 1) Research access – “the window” – is limited to two days per week. Staff will work to set predictable days.
- 2) The research window is two hours in length. Staff will work to set predictable times.
- 3) Access is by appointment only. This is the only way we can meet the requirement to ensure no more than two people are present. Appointments can be made via email only, and are not confirmed unless a reply is received from Town staff. Please note: confirmation is not instantaneous; patience is appreciated.

The staff addresses to use are:

- i. Town Administrator – townadmin@gmavt.net

¹ The maximum appointment times have been amended to 60 minutes, following additional staff discussion. This adjustment, and corresponding supporting adjustments, can be seen in numbers three, five, six, and seven.

² New to revised memo. Google doc already created and ready for use.

ii. Town Treasurer – waitsfld@gmavt.net

- 4) Each appointment is 30 minutes in length. This provides as many as eight research slots each week.
- 5) Appointments expire promptly at the half-hour and hour marks.
- 6) An individual may reserve no more than 60 minutes per week. The 60 minutes may be in a single day or two, separate 30-minute sessions.
- 7) Additional time may be available if research slots are open and staff are available.
- 8) All attorneys/researchers/individuals granted access³ need to adhere to the following guidelines at all times:
 - a. The individual shall wear a mask and gloves. Masks and gloves are to be supplied by the individual, not the Town of Waitsfield.
 - b. The individual granted access shall bring his/her own sanitizing wipes and hand sanitizer.
 - c. The individual shall sanitize all areas used and/or touched. This includes restrooms.
 - d. The individual granted access shall maintain appropriate social distance from all employees at all times.
 - e. Failure to adhere to any of these provisions shall result in a denial or termination of access. An appeal of denial or termination of access may be made to the Waitsfield Selectboard.

Requests for electronic documents

An individual or entity may request copies of documents to be scanned and sent.

Requests should be both as limited as possible (copies of deeds, zoning permits, tax bills, and so on) and as detailed as possible. Town staff shall not provide research services, and may deny a request in full or part as a result. Town staff may also limit response to electronic document requests to the same hours allotted for the access windows.

In assisting with remote access, the Town is making no guarantees regarding any documents or the contents thereof. Town staff is simply attempting to facilitate access in response to extraordinary circumstances. All responsibilities and liabilities remain solely with the attorneys, researchers, assessors and appraisers, buyers, and sellers.

³ Added, “individuals granted access,” to ensure as broad an application as possible.