

Altoona Life

OCTOBER
2020



Providing a healthy dose of Altoona Attitude!

HOW THE CITY HAS ADJUSTED TO COVID-19 CHALLENGES

WHAT'S NEW?

P1... City's COVID-19 Response

P4... Fall Reminders

P5... Winter Reminders

P4... Water News

BEGGARS' NIGHT



Altoona's
Trick or
Treating night
Friday, October
30th
6—8pm

CITY OFFICES CLOSED

Thanksgiving

Thurs. 11/26 and Fri. 11/27

Christmas

Thurs. 12/24 and Fri. 12/25

New Year's Fri. 1/1



CONTINUING TO PROVIDE CARE AND SAFETY DURING COVID—19

The Altoona Fire Department (AFD) personnel have certainly seen a dramatic change in their industry due to the COVID-19 virus and the National Health Crisis as a whole. The day to day operations have seen significant changes that began in March of this year and continue to date. The most notable change is present when we interact with the public during any call for service. Our crew members now wear as a baseline an N95 mask, safety glasses, and gloves. They will add the addition of a disposable gown and full face mask when criteria are met for respiratory illnesses or suspicion of COVID-19.

Changes to the other routines within the walls of the AFD include guests to the building completing a screening process prior to entering the building. Visitors are required to wear a mask for the duration of their visit, and are limited to select areas within the building. Fire department personnel also made adjustments to the internal layout of the building to provide for social distancing while crew members are on duty.

Additionally, they have increased the cleaning requirements for the Altoona Fire Department and the vehicles utilized. They use a UV light system, a Hurricane Electrostatic sprayer, DC200 sanitizing solution, and Germicidal cleaning solutions to provide for a safe and clean environment for the crew members and citizens who work, play, or reside in Altoona.

The AFD leadership team is continuously working with Polk County Public Health, Iowa Department of Public Health, and CDC to maintain safe and effective policies and procedures to ensure safe and effective operations. The staff's internal education has been revised to allow for up-to-date information so our crew members can function at their highest level.

MEETING THE INSPECTIONS NEEDS DURING A PANDEMIC By Michael Pardekooper, Building Official

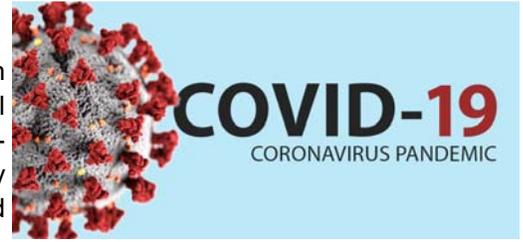
As the world reacted to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Building Department had to quickly navigate new methods and procedures for meeting the needs of our construction community, as well as providing uninterrupted service to our citizens. The closing of the City Hall building to the public severed one of our most commonly used methods of submitting permits and payments. With all of our permit applications available on the City's website, and the ability to receive credit card payments over the phone, we were quickly transformed into a primarily digital department. Applications and payments also continued to be received through the USPS mail system.



In May, while most of life slowed down with cancellation of events and closure of the usual summer attractions, the Building Department had a 36% increase in our miscellaneous permits over 2019, and a 110% increase over 2018. These miscellaneous permits include homeowner projects such as fences, decks, sheds, swimming pools, and basement finishes. With many residents working from home, home improvement projects became the theme of the summer.

MEETING THE INSPECTIONS NEEDS DURING A PANDEMIC—continued

Inspection services were continued using social distancing measures, with no one was allowed on the premises during inspections for new residential construction projects. Commercial project inspections required anyone on-site during an inspection to maintain a minimum of 20' separation from City inspectors. We suspended all inspections within occupied dwellings and rental properties for a period, but we did perform some inspections of occupied dwellings with contractors through various live feed video resources. We have resumed these inspections practicing social distancing recommendations and wearing masks and gloves when inspecting occupied dwellings.



This was definitely uncharted territory for a building department to respond to an emergency health proclamation of this magnitude, but we feel we have responded appropriately and have not incurred any positive COVID test results for any of our Building or Housing Inspectors. As City Hall remains closed to the public, we will continue to observe recommended health practices, and we look forward to a return to normal functions for our department.

Michael Pardekooper, Building Official



Altoona Police Department enjoyed safely being with the public at Adventureland's Oktoberfest on October 3, 2020.

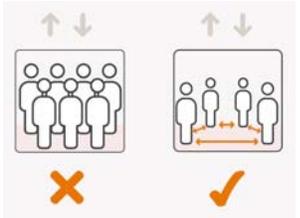
ALTOONA POLICE STAY CONNECTED DURING COVID-19

COVID-19 has impacted the Altoona Police Department as with everyone else. Our officers are relational with our community, and it's been disappointing to postpone/cancel our events. Though keeping the community safe remains our top priority. Officers still respond to calls, using the appropriate PPE and respecting social distancing. We have participated in birthday parades, SEP Homecoming Court Parade, and honoring outstanding citizens via Zoom at the City Council Meetings. The Police Department is utilizing social media to serve our community virtually, where we used to be in person. We've sent several videos to schools and the library for educational purposes they can use at their discretion.

We look forward to being able to be with you in person as soon as it is safe to do so.

CITY HALL FOLLOWING SAFETY PROTOCOLS

City Hall closed in the middle of March and except for about a 7 day stretch in July has remained closed. This has helped reduce the risk of our employees on both the City Hall and PD side of the municipal building from being exposed and, also, exposing the public.



City Hall used a variety of ways to reduce the staff's exposure to COVID-19 while also maintaining the essential functions of the city continue. Some staff positions allowed employees to work from home which continued through the beginning of June. During this same time period, other staff split shifts so essential jobs could be accomplished and still maintain the safety of personnel that act as each others back ups. In addition, some staff were able to relocate to another office to provide social distancing.

Water Utility Billing has been the most disrupted similar to the Building Department because citizens and applicants are no longer able to come into City Hall to ask questions, apply for utilities or make payments. City Hall is equipped to handle on-line utility payments (partnered through Municipal Online Payments), automatic drafts, pay-by-phone (through 3rd party provider), and payment drop box (right in front of City Hall/ Police Station). To find out more about this, check out: <https://www.altoona-iowa.com/departments/community-services/water/>

Council, Board of Adjustment, Planning and Zoning Commission, and Park Board meetings all went to online forums through the GoToMeeting Video Conferencing software. You can check the variety of agendas and minutes at <https://www.altoona-iowa.com/about-altoona/> and then click "About Altoona" to view them.



STAY SAFE—STAY HEALTHY



Steps to Take when Trick or Treating

Traditional Halloween activities are fun, but some can increase the risk of getting or spreading COVID-19 or influenza. Plan alternate ways to participate in Halloween.

Make trick-or-treating safer

- Avoid direct contact with trick-or-treaters.
- Give out treats outdoors, if possible.
- Set up a station with individually bagged treats for kids to take.
- Wash hands before handling treats.
- Wear a mask.

-INFORMATION PROVIDED BY CDC. For more information check the CDC's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

PUBLIC WORKS AND PUBLIC UTILITIES CARRY ON



The Utilities Department, which handles water, storm and waste water for the City of Altoona, in response to COVID-19 relocated two staff per each utility building throughout the community. Home

installation of meters or meter replacements except in emergencies have been stopped for homes that are currently occupied.

Parks and Streets Departments had employees work 10 hour days with varying days off. Also, the departments divided staff between areas for break times.

All departments have employees take temperatures and wash hands upon arrival. Employees disinfect common areas and vehicles more often as COVID-19 persists. From mid-March through June, employees were limited to one employee per vehicle.

Parks, Streets and Utilities departments were able to hire some open positions. Four of the six new hires are pictured above from left to right: Justin Wykoff, Kain Craddock, Andrew Starr and Dustin Krueger. It is an exciting time to **3** start working for the City of Altoona.

ALTOONA PUBLIC LIBRARY GETS CREATIVE



The Altoona Public Library has continued to adjust the hours of operations, book drop operations and limited visit times within the library building. The library also provides no-contact curbside

service. The schedule allows staff to disinfect the library and pull books that patrons have requested. The library staff wear masks and gloves when providing services. Masks are also required for patrons visiting the library to pick up a book. The library has arranged the collections and floor space to encourage one way traffic and browsing with at least 6 feet apart. Programs are currently all grab and go, and all are presented online. Public meeting spaces are currently not available.

As the pandemic continues, please stay up to day on library hours and services at <https://www.altoonalibrary.com/>



We all were able to learn a new weather term because of our August 10th storm—Derecho.

Our Streets, Parks and Utilities Departments did an amazing job of maintaining the traffic lights and cleaning up the City after derecho. City crews picked up approximately 9,000 cubic feet of debris.



ALTOONA FALL REMINDERS

Remember to change your clocks back one hour on Sunday, November 1, 2020. This is also a great opportunity to change the batteries in your smoke detector.



If you have difficulty changing the batteries in your fire alarm, please contact the fire department at 515-967-2216. Someone will come out and help you.

Weather Radios

NOAA Weather radios are fastest for instant information about severe weather watches and warnings in your area. These specially equipped radios pick up broadcasts from your area's National Weather Radio 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In severe weather situations, your NOAA Weather Radio will sound an alarm anytime severe weather threatens if it is equipped with a Tone Alert feature. Most models can be programmed to sound alert for specific counties.



CARBON MONOXIDE –

Leading Cause of Poisoning Deaths in America

Cold weather means your furnace will be getting a workout. Proper care, maintenance and regular filter changes are required for your furnace to operate effectively and efficiently. Proper and routine maintenance helps to eliminate the possibilities of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Everyone is at risk for carbon monoxide poisoning. A colorless, odorless deadly gas, carbon monoxide adheres to hemoglobin in your body's bloodstream, offsetting oxygen, which is needed to survive. Symptoms are as minor as flu like symptoms. As levels of carboxyhemoglobin increase, vomiting, loss consciousness and eventually brain damage or death may occur.

Sources of carbon monoxide inside buildings include house fires, faulty furnaces, heaters, wood-burning stoves, internal combustion vehicle exhaust, electrical generators, propane-fueled equipment such as portable stoves, and gasoline-powered tools such as leaf blowers, lawn mowers, high-pressure washers, concrete cutting saws, power trowels, and welders. Please do preventative maintenance to protect yourself and loved ones. Also, purchase a carbon monoxide detector for your home.

LAST BRUSH DROP OFF IS NOVEMBER 7th

The brush pile is open from 8:00am—12:00pm on November 7th. Residents disposing of brush can enter through the north gate of the Altoona Aquatics Park (located at 1200 Venbury Dr.) and south of the Altoona Skateboard Park.

Please have information identifying you as a City of Altoona resident ready when you drop off brush.



Yard waste Compost it! season ends on November 24th.

LEAVES – Nature's Natural Fertilizer

Leaves are nature's way of providing nutrients for your lawn and garden. Chopped leaves feed the soil. The job takes little time and the materials are free. A mulching-type lawn mower will chop the leaves which you will need to leave over winter. You can leave ½ inch to 1 inch of chopped leaves on the grass. Just be sure some grass blades are sticking up above the mulch. The mulch will settle down in a few weeks. The organic material settles into the soil under the turn and causes a microbial population explosion, which reduces soil compaction, improves water storage, and leads to better drainage. Perhaps most important, these microbes are producing food for the grass plants all the way into early next summer, reducing fertilizer needs.

If you have a huge amount of leaves or you choose not to mulch, please remember not to blow the leave into the street where they can clogged the storm sewers.

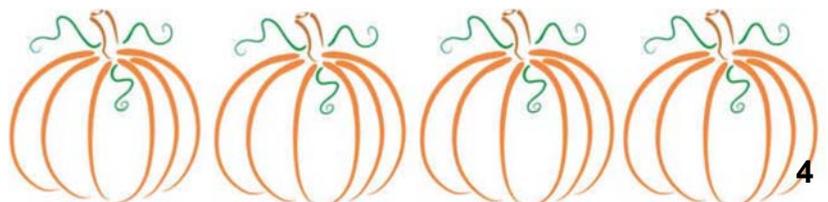
ALTOONA PARKS



The permanent bathrooms located at Haines, Lion's, Village parks and Sam Wise Youth Complex will be closed on approximately October 15 for the season. Portable bathrooms located throughout the City parks will be removed for the season on approximately October 15. The City does this to protect the pipes from freezing. Although we may have some beautiful, warm fall days, the nights may dip into freezing temperatures. The City anticipates being able to open the bathrooms and provide portable bathrooms in the spring on approximately April 15, weather permitting.

**LIONS PARK RENTALS HAVE CEASED
DUE TO COVID-19.**

**Please check the city's website for updated information:
www.altoona-iowa.com**



WINTER REMINDERS

SNOW ORDINANCE

The snow removal parking ban is in effect from October through May or anytime snow and/or ice removal efforts are required. When the weather forecast predicts weather conditions that will require enforcement of the parking ban, a notice will be published on the City of Altoona's and/or Altoona Police Department's Facebook and Twitter pages.

HOMEOWNER SNOW REMOVAL RESPONSIBILITIES

All sidewalks adjacent to your property are your responsibility and are required to have snow removed within 24 hours following the cessation of the weather event from which it was deposited. All complaint calls will be referred to the Building Department for follow-up and code enforcement. Snow placed on sidewalks by City plows where the sidewalk meets the street is the responsibility of the adjacent property owner to remove. City snowplows will not clear private driveways except under emergency conditions and with the approval of their supervisor. The snow placed in your driveway by the City plows is your responsibility to remove. Please do not move snow from your driveway into the street.

Clean around fire hydrants in your yard so the Fire Department may have easy access to your hydrant in case there is a fire in your neighborhood. Please try and keep your driveway and approach to your house clear in case the police or fire personnel need to respond to your home. Postal workers and others delivering packages to your home will also appreciate a safe route to your front door.

Clean around mailboxes and be sure the mailboxes are properly installed behind the curb line to withstand snow clearing efforts by the City. **The City assumes NO responsibility for mailboxes damaged during snow removal.** Thank you for your efforts to keep Altoona safe and accessible!

We Need Your Eyes!



The City of Altoona relies on our residents to let staff know of safety concerns created by weather conditions, snow removal operations, water main breaks, potholes, etc. If you have a concern, please contact City Hall at 967-5136 (Monday—Friday; 8am—4:30pm) or 967-2734 (during off hours and weekends).

ICE SKATING IN ALTOONA

We are hoping to have the ice rink located in Haines Park up this winter.



City of Altoona attempts to remove all snow from all streets in a reasonable amount of time following a snow event. The first priority is to get the arterial streets cleared and maintained to provide access for the public, police, fire and rescue units.



Sand, salt, and liquid de-icers are used to maintain the roads during winter weather events. The truck pictured is one of many the City uses to clear the roads and apply sand and salt. Please maintain a safe following distance of at least 50 feet from all snow removal equipment.

Streets may be temporarily closed if they become impassible due to automobile accidents or stranded automobiles. City roads will be cleared only if City equipment can safely push the snow without hitting vehicles parked in the street. Cul-de-sacs will not be cleared if garbage and recycling toters are placed in the City street. The roads will be cleared when the obstructions are removed either by the owners or towed at the owner's expense.

CITY TRAILS IN WINTER



The City of Altoona does clear the snow off of the trails during winter. We do not treat the trails with salt or sand. The trails are cleared last following the city facilities' sidewalks and parking lots. Many communities close all trails during winter months but we want ours to be open for use. Please enjoy the trails but be cautious of the weather conditions.

Christmas Tree Pick Up

Only on December 28—January 8



Christmas trees placed at the curb on your regular trash collections day will be picked up. Trees must be free of all ornaments, have NO plastic bags on them, and must have a "Compost It" sticker (\$1.25) attached. If there is snowfall on the day of collection, you must be sure that your tree is accessible for pickup. Thank you.

TRASH & RECYCLING CART PLACEMENT IN WINTER

Please remember that your garbage and recycling toters must be accessible 18 inches from the curb.

Your clean driveway approach may be the best option during heavy snow times.

Please do not place your toter on City streets. City snowplows can not clear snow properly when toters are placed on City streets. This is especially true in cul-de-sacs which are impossible to plow if toters are placed in the road.



WATER NEWS

Payments can be paid to:

- **Altoona City Hall, CURRENTLY CLOSED**
- **Deposit Drop Box**, in front of City Hall, 900 Venbury Dr. – box is emptied each morning.
- **Hy-Vee Food Stores**, Customer Service Department – accepts payment between the 15th of the month to the 3rd of the month, but do NOT take payments after the 3rd.
- **Automatic Payment** – deducted from your checking or savings on the due date of the month. (You will receive a \$5.00 credit on your next bill for signing up on the automatic plan.) <http://www.altoona-iowa.com/download/City%20Departments/Water/Auto-Draft-Form.pdf>
- **Pay By Phone- 833-271-0804**- You will need your utility account number and address to make this transaction. You can pay with a Visa or Mastercard. **There will be a \$1.25 for each transaction made through the Interactive Voice Response system.** This fee is retained by the service provider, and is not paid to the City of Altoona.
- **Online Payment** – check out http://www.altoona-iowa.com/departments/community-services__trashed/water/

Altoona Rain Barrel Grant Program

To promote stormwater Best Management Practices throughout the City, funding has been allocated to provide a grant program for purchase and installation of rain barrels for residential homes. The Rain Barrel Grant Program allows for reimbursement for costs of the rain barrel up to a maximum of \$75 with a limit of one per residential property.



Rain barrels collect and store rainwater from rooftops for watering lawns and gardens. The water captured reduces the amount of stormwater running off the property during rainfall events. Because this water is not treated, it should not be used for drinking water.

For more information on how to apply to the Rain Barrel Grant Program please check out: <http://www.altoona-iowa.com/download/City%20Departments/Stormwater/Rain-Barrel-Grant-Application.pdf>

Delinquent Water Bills:

- Water bills are mailed out on the 15th of the month, and due at the end of business (4:30 p.m.) on the 3rd day of the month. If the 3rd of month falls on the weekend or holiday, the bills are due by 3:00 p.m. the next business day. Billing period is the month prior to the bills. Example: January 15th bills are for water/sewer used from the middle of November to the middle of December.
- A ten percent (10%) late penalty is applied at the end of the day on the 3rd of the month. If the 3rd of month falls on the weekend or holiday, the ten percent (10%) late penalty is applied at 3:01 p.m. on the next business day.
- RED TAGS are delivered and a \$10.00 service fee assessed if the bill is not paid in full within 23 days of billing date.
- Service is disconnected if the bill is not paid in full within 25 days of billing date. Altoona Municipal Code Section 98.12.
- A fee of \$25.00 during work hours (8:00 am to 4:30 pm) and after hours \$75.00 (after hours, for health emergency only) will be required and the total bill paid in full prior to turning service back on.
- A \$15.00 fee is charged for all checks not honored by the bank.
- If the 3rd day of the month falls on a weekend or a holiday, the due date will be 10:30 am on the next business day after the 3rd.

Reconnect Fee:

If water is shut off, a reconnect fee will be assessed as follows:

\$25 (8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) or \$75 (after hours, for health emergency only)

Call the Clerk's office between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. at 515-967-5136 for more information.

THINKING TOWARDS NEXT SUMMER...



Whether your home is new construction or has that lived in feel, an irrigation meter can help you save money on your monthly water bill, especially in the summer.

An irrigation meter is a separate meter that measures the amount of water used for items such as lawns, washing exterior surfaces, washing vehicles, filling pools, etc. By having the irrigation meter installed, the sanitary sewer rate fee is not assessed for water usage in the "irrigation system," which would include the outside faucets. A separate meter is the only way to accurately measure the water used exclusively from outside faucets. You can find out more about irrigation meters at: http://www.altoona-iowa.com/departments/community-services__trashed/water/.