The Library Board of Trustees has submitted the library Phase 4 Reopening Plan to the Chatham Borough and Chatham Township Health Officers and will vote on whether to open the library to a limited number of patrons by appointment the evening of March 15. Once this is approved, residents may make a half-hour appointment each day to browse the library collections.

1. You will be asked to have your temperature taken upon entry.
2. The entrance will be through the rear entrance off the parking lot, and exit through the front doors on Main Street. Patrons with mobility issues will be permitted to exit through the back doors.
3. Maximum time in the library will be 30 minutes in a 24-hour period.
4. Hours for appointments:
   a. Monday through Thursday 11 am-7 pm
   b. Friday 11 am-6 pm
   c. Saturday 11 am-5 pm
5. Current hours for Takeout Service will continue simultaneously.

**What Is Library of the Chathams Doing for Me?**

**In the interim, what is the Library doing?**

- Providing Library Takeout service, putting thousands of books and other items in residents’ hands every month.
- Offering Virtual Browse by Appointment service (demonstration of this service is available at [https://chathamlibrary.org/virtual-browsing/](https://chathamlibrary.org/virtual-browsing/))
- Presenting an extensive array of virtual programs.
- Weekly recording for telephone access line so people without Internet can learn about our services and which programs can be attended via telephone.
- Home Delivery Service for homebound residents of The Chathams, with the help of Friends of the Library volunteers.
- Creating programming to support local businesses, including virtual programs by local business owners and feature articles in eNewsletters.
- Issuing library cards virtually to enable residents to download eBooks, eAudiobooks, music and movies from home.
- Answering reference questions by telephone and email.
- Developing new resources in response to quarantine, such as Library of Things for people to borrow, including puzzles, telescopes, laptops, and Wi-Fi hotspots.
- Sending weekly eNewsletters that contain complete information on everything going on at the library with something new in every newsletter. Sign up for these at: [https://chathamlibrary.org/library-newsletter/](https://chathamlibrary.org/library-newsletter/)
- Mailing an abbreviated version of our print newsletter to each home and business in Chatham Borough and Chatham Township every few months with updated information about programs and resources as well as library services.
- Increasing our downloadable eBooks and audiobooks collections extensively.
- Supporting School District of the Chathams with a shared eBooks collection *eBooks for All*, developed by school media specialists and managed by library staff.
- Providing a virtual meetings hosting service for local nonprofit groups.
“The library should be open,” said one respondent to the community-wide survey disseminated January 15-February 15.

In response, library leadership wants to know what it is residents want that they cannot have while the library is not “open” to the public. While the library Board of Trustees works toward opening the building to our public, what is it that residents are not getting?

**Service Request: I want to use a computer and I can’t.**

**Library Response:** Residents may borrow a laptop computer to use at home. In the warm time of the year, residents borrowed our laptops to use outside of the building with free WiFi. Our remote printing service has become more popular than ever.

**Service Request: I want to be able to get books.**

**Library Response:** Books can be requested and reserved for pickup in the library vestibule. While people cannot physically browse the library shelves, we have made virtual appointments available to accommodate this.

**Service Request: But I want to pick my own books.**

**Library Response:** Tell us any topic or author (email librarian@chathamlibrary.org or call the library 973-635-0603) and, at your request, library staff will select 10 or more books for you to choose from through Library Takeout. The selections will be in a blue basket with your name on them, already checked out to you. Just mark a check in TAKEN, and the rest will be removed from your account.

**Service Request: The library doesn’t have enough eBooks.**

**Library Response:** The library purchases eBooks on two separate platforms to ensure that our residents don’t have long waiting periods for titles. The cloudLibrary platform is shared with Morris County and other counties’ libraries, and there are often long waits for popular titles. The Overdrive platform is for Chatham residents only. There are lots of eBooks waiting for you at: [https://chathamlibrary.org/digitalcontent/](https://chathamlibrary.org/digitalcontent/)

Download the extensively expanded collection of eBooks and eAudiobooks, music and movies from the library mobile app (search for *Main Libraries* in your app store) or website (chathamlibrary.org).

**Service Request: Why is the library paying staff while the library is closed?**

**Library Response:** All of these services are being provided with a reduced staff as the Board cut library expenses partly by delaying the hiring of replacement staff for the three individuals who left library employment in 2020. Takeout service takes far more time than checking out books selected by residents in person. The workload is greater and staffing is limited.
The one activity that people cannot do is congregate and socialize with others. While virtual meetings and programs are no substitute for being with others, the library is able to host virtual meetings for you until we can all safely gather everywhere. Just let us know your needs.

The library director provided a live weekly program for residents to ask questions about the library but very few people attended. That program is still taking place the first and third Monday of each month at 7:30 pm. Access is available at:  https://chathamlibrary.org/library-reopening-plan/

It became obvious from the survey and from comments on local social media sites that people were unaware of what the library has to offer. Requests for a fax machine, movie screening space, a book discussion group, a chess table outside, eBooks, and children’s programming stunned library staff, who already provide all these things. Six (6) of our fulltime staff members took on outreach functions as part of their jobs over the past seven years, and spend the equivalent of 1.5 full-time staff members time on outreach functions to alert residents to programs and services available, including maintaining the library website, mobile app, and outreach via social media and press releases.

It’s easy to criticize but almost impossible to know the inner workings of an institution like a public library. Just because we make it look easy doesn’t mean it really is easy to do. Social media users: Please consider addressing your questions directly to the library. We want to hear and respond to your concerns.

The graphic below outlines the reopening issues for Library of the Chathams:

Why is Library of the Chathams open for Takeout Service only?
The Board of Trustees wants the building to be as safe as possible and is working with our Director to create the safest atmosphere within our capability for staff and patrons.

Why are other libraries open to the public?
Our building is unique: we have no way to improve ventilation while controlling the humidity problem we’ve had since 2017. We intend to correct this with the Bridging Space to Place Project. Neighboring libraries have opened and then re-closed.

Why are stores and other businesses open but the library is not?
The main difference is that the library is a repository of books. Some schools and businesses can increase ventilation simply by opening the windows. This is not an option for us since increased humidity can potentially destroy the entire book collection.

What factors are being considered in the decision to open or not?
• When the Borough and Township determine with their health officers it is in the interests of public safety to reopen their municipal buildings.
• The library offers a wide array of services that can safely and without contact accomplish its mission of serving the community.

Does the library have a plan for reopening soon?
The Board of Trustees has a reopening plan in five (5) phases, which was disseminated between April and June when we entered Phase 3. That plan is on the library’s website.

How does the library keep people safe?
• Residents enter our Takeout area one person at a time, wearing a mask.
• Staff, as well as contractors and repairmen, are required to have their temperature taken upon entering the building, fill out a health questionnaire, and wear a mask at all times while in the building.
• Staff workspaces have been rearranged to ensure at least a 6-foot distance. Social distancing and hand washing rules are followed.
• All frequently touched surfaces are disinfected twice daily.
• All returned materials are quarantined for three (3) days.
• Plexiglass barriers have been installed at every service desk.
• Disinfecting wipes/hand sanitizer dispensers are placed throughout.
• The HVAC system has been updated with germicidal UV lights.

(click image to view larger)