

COVID-19 has taught us to “hunker down,” to “shelter in place,” all the while maintaining a six foot buffer between us. Thus it was that there were just four people in the conference room at Town Hall: myself (Angus McDonald, First Selectman), Gina Sopneski, and Videographers Margo Hillfinger and John Greene. Digitally speaking, Selectmen Duane Gates and Jim Olson and an audience of 18 or so were present *via* the 21st Century wizardry of “Zoom.”

Resulting from Governor Lamont’s Executive Orders we were able to hold our first remote public meetings on Tuesday evening, with both the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance utilizing zoom technology to “gather.” While we still have a lot to learn, the meetings took place in a manner that ensured that the public could be “present” and participate. I am hopeful that with this or similar technology all of our scheduled public meetings will be back on schedule. We do have some learning to do, please bear with our early attempts, but public participation is a cornerstone of our democratic traditions, and we will be doing our level best to ensure that despite the nature of this pandemic such participation will continue.

Scott Martinson (Director) and Sherry Carlson (Public Health Nurse) from Connecticut River Area Health District (CRAHD) briefed us on state and local response efforts, really reinforcing the advice that social distancing and staying home are the best defense we, as individuals and as a community), can utilize. CRAHD’s website is one of the places we have been recommending to obtain accurate information and advice together with those of the CT Department of Public Health and the CDC. Please visit any or all of these sites: www.crahd.org; <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus>; and <https://www.cdc.gov/> Scott, Sherry, and all the folk at CRAHD have been working tirelessly to help keep us informed and safe and their efforts are very much appreciated.

Another important discussion during the Board of Selectmen’s meeting centered on the Executive Orders that address public meetings, elections, and budget voting. The orders clearly prohibit public gatherings of over 50 people and allows for no town meetings, public votes for budgets of both school districts and municipalities.

This was discussed at both BOS and BOF and no one is pleased. Be assured that we are working with communities throughout the state to determine how best to keep public participation as close to the norm as possible.

Toward that end I attended multiple meetings yesterday (remote video or teleconference), mostly focused on the new procedures and how to best serve our citizens.

Nationally there appear to be some inconsistencies in the wide-ranging topics that have generated the rulings, orders and suggestions handed down from a variety of agencies and various levels of government. It does appear that the Governors have largely taken over the planning process. This makes sense to me—the individual states are far more familiar with the needs of their constituents,

The entire process has been very *ad hoc*; planning based on random attacks by a disease whose purpose is simply to wreak havoc on the population is scattershot at best. It should be no surprise that dealing with this strange new order should be so difficult. Public meeting procedures offer a good example.

It appears that electronically remote appearances are acceptable to determine quorums and official attendance. The procedure for recording votes, however, is more stringent: individuals must be physically present during polling. How do we conduct a meeting remotely, yet provide a mechanism for votes to be recorded in person? This is just one example of the dislocation Coronavirus has foisted on us. Government by and of the People is as basic to our country as to guard the public's health.

We will do our best to mirror our normal process. We will have our public hearings, albeit remotely for the time being. How we vote is the bigger question and the one we are working on with communities throughout the state. We are not alone.

The economic impact of this virus is something else entirely, and that was discussed by the Governor at his news conference and immediately following in

his meeting with First Selectpeople and Mayors from around the state. He announced the launch a zero-interest loan program to help Connecticut small businesses and nonprofits that have been impacted by COVID-19. Information about that and other state and federal programs for both businesses and workers follows:

For Businesses

Small Business Loan at 0% Interest - NEW
[The Connecticut Recovery Bridge Loan](#) is offering relief to small businesses through this new DECD program. Qualifying small businesses and nonprofits with 100 or fewer employees can apply for a loan of up to \$75,000 or three months of operating expenses (whichever is less). **The loan program will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.**

Eligibility Requirements

To be considered for this program, a business or nonprofit must:

- Have no more than 100 employees;
- Be in good standing with the Department of Revenue Services (DRS) & DECD;
- Have been profitable prior to March 10, 2020 with no adverse personal credit reports 60 days past due the past six months;
- Not be involved in real estate, multi-level marketing, adult entertainment, cannabis or firearms; nor be a state elected public official or state employee.

[Click for the Application](#)

Small & Midsize Business Relief - March 23

Small and Midsize employers can use [New Refundable Payroll Tax Credits](#), designed to immediately reimburse 100% of the cost of providing Coronavirus-related leave to their employees. Key Takeaways:

For Workers

Tax Day Now July 15 - March 23

The US Treasury Department and the IRS have extended the federal tax filing deadline to July 15. [Taxpayers can defer federal income tax payments due on April 15, 2020, to July 15, 2020](#), without penalties and interest, regardless of the amount owed. This deferment applies to all taxpayers, including individuals, trusts and estates, corporations and other non-corporate tax filers as well as those who pay self-employment tax.

CT DRS Extends Individual Tax Filing Deadline - March 23

At the direction of Governor Ned Lamont, the [Connecticut Department of Revenue Services \(DRS\) is extending the filing and payment deadline for personal income tax returns 90 days, to July 15, 2020](#). The extension also applies to Connecticut estimated income tax payments for the first and second quarters of 2020.

CT DMV - March 23

The Connecticut DMV is automatically extending the deadline for expiring driver's licences, registrations, emissions testing and more. [Learn more](#).

60-Day Foreclosure & Eviction Moratorium - March 23

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) authorized the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to

- Employees receive up to 80 hours of paid sick leave; and
- Employers receive immediate 100% reimbursement for paid leave.

[Learn more](#) about [IR-2020-57](#)

Governor Lamont Directs Non-Essential Industries to Reduce In-Person Employees

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March 23

As of 8pm Monday, March 23 Governor Lamont's [Executive Order 7H](#) directs all non-essential businesses and non-profits to reduce the in-person workforce at each business location by 100% from pre-state of emergency declaration employment levels.

The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) has compiled a list of [Essential Businesses](#) on its website.

[Guidance for Non-Essential Businesses](#)

Non-essential businesses may continue activities conducted off-site and/or by telecommuting or working from home. Retailers may be staffed on-site, provided that they only offer remote ordering (e.g. phone, internet, mail, dropbox) and curb-side pick-up or delivery. Businesses and nonprofits may allow staff or third parties on site to the **minimum** extent necessary to provide security, maintenance and receipt of mail and packages.

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implement an immediate [foreclosure and eviction moratorium](#) for single family homeowners with FHA-insured mortgages for the next 60 days. These moratoriums are part of the continued effort to address impacts to the financial well-being of Americans caused by Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Access Health CT

[Access Health CT Announces Special Enrollment](#) period for uninsured CT residents starting Thursday, March 19 and ending Thursday, April 2.

Enrollment must be done via telephone 1-855-365-2428 (TTY: 1-855-789-2428) Mondays through Fridays from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

CT residents who become [unemployed](#) can apply for health benefits online through [AccessHealthCT](#).

CT Department of Labor (CTDOL) [File for Unemployment](#)

Unemployment benefits are available to workers whose employer needs to temporarily shut down or slow down business. Employees who are furloughed by the emergency but expect to return to work can access up to at least six weeks of benefits. [FAQs related Coronavirus](#)

Eversource

[Disconnections Postponed](#)

To decrease any financial hardship, Eversource has postponed disconnections for nonpayment for residential and business customers across their electric, natural gas, and water operations. Visit the [Eversource](#) website for the latest COVID-19 customer information and for help with financial programs such as setting up a payment plan.

Small Business Administration (SBA)

[Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program](#) –

Businesses and some non-profits in all CT Counties impacted by the health emergency are eligible for disaster assistance. Loan applications can be submitted through a **[Three Step Process](#)** (for information in Espanol **[click here](#)**).

Payments Deferred on Existing SBA Disaster Loans - March 23

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) announced changes to help borrowers still paying back SBA loans from previous disasters. By making this change, **[deferments through December 31, 2020, will be automatic](#)**. Borrowers of home and business disaster loans do not have to contact SBA to request deferment.

CT Department of Labor (CTDOL)

[FAQs](#)

The CT DOL has posted a FAQ sheet for employers and workers: **[Frequently Asked Questions About Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) for Workers and Employers](#)**.

[Shared Work](#)

Employers reducing hours but not furloughing employees can partner with CTDOL's **[Shared Work](#)** program, which allows employers to reduce employees' work schedules by 10 percent to 60 percent and supplement lost wages with unemployment benefits.

CT Department of Revenue Services (CTDRS)

[Extends Filing Deadline for Certain Annual State Business Tax Returns](#)

Consistent with the emergency declarations signed by Governor Lamont, the Connecticut Department of Revenue Services (**[DRS](#)**) is granting an automatic extension of Connecticut filing deadlines for certain annual state tax returns as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. **[Learn](#)**

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- Unlimited Data for all customers
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[More.](#)

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