

## Town Manager Report to the Board of Selectmen – Mon., April 6, 2020

### Updates from Town Department heads

- Parks and Recreation staff have been busy on a couple of fronts. First, the cancellation of several programs has led to processing refunds for programs that were scheduled and either were cut short or we never began. To date, refunds have only been processed for programming running through April. If cancellations continue into May, we may have more refunds to process.  
Parks and Recreation is also preparing as if we are going to be having a summer parks program. Staff has completed interviewing prospective park counselors and is working to do complete background checks, so that in the event we are able to move forward with accepting registrations for the summer parks program, they'll be ready to go. More news on this will be coming.  
Finally, Parks and Recreation is also working on the roll out of some virtual programming and is planning a fun community game in partnership with the HW Shop Local folks, I hope to have more information about this next week as well.
- COA/Senior Center staff have been busy outreaching to local seniors. They began at the state of this response by contacting our seniors over 90 and are working their way backward through the seniors in town. Each senior is getting a call from the COA to check in, make sure folks feel they have what they need, know how to contact the town if needs arise and clarify that they are doing alright.  
COA staff is also getting ready to rollout a volunteer program to assist our seniors with their yard work. The program will allow a local volunteer to go to a senior home and cut the grass, or rake leaves or trim bushes, etc without making contact with the senior. The volunteers are being prepared not to speak directly with the homeowners they are going to assist and to use proper equipment, like masks and gloves and they are bringing their own tools to complete the work.
- Patton Homestead has actually had quite a few visitors during this period as a number of families and residents have been going to the homestead to walk the grounds. Last week, the Homestead hosted two separate "Storybook Tours" which combined drew about 100 participants over the course of two or three days. Patton Homestead Director Kaleigh Pare will be working to bring additional programming to the Homestead over the next few weeks as well.  
The Patton Homestead also learned last week that it has been awarded a grant from the Essex National Heritage Area partnership for \$2,000 to assist with interpretive signage, a brochure for the property and new rose bushes for the rose garden. The grant will also be matched by funds that were planned to make the parking lot more accessible by continuing the bluestone pathway across the front of the house and through the garden. There will be more information on this project as it moves forward.
- HW Library – As you know, the library was shut down to the public at the start of the emergency response and then completely closed even to most staff by the Governor's shelter advisory. Library Director Kim Butler is working on a possible idea to help our residents weather the current crisis, by creatively finding a way to make library materials available without increasing person to person interactions. Anthony Ansaldi and I have

asked Kim to reach out to the health department folks to work on this idea and we hope to have more information for the public soon.

- COVID-19 webpage – Our office has been working on a new webpage on the town website, that will become a repository for all local information about our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The page is under construction and we're hopeful it will be ready to be rolled out this week. We'll utilize social media to alert people when it is ready and we will of course continue to work with the Hamilton Board of Health to make sure we have the current, best information possible.
- Return to Work Policy – after sharing information with our neighboring towns on how people are welcoming back to the workplace, employees who have called in sick, etc. We put into place a return to work policy today and started to share that information with our staff. I want to thank Christine Lee and Michelle Lee Carroll for their help in making the draft policies we received, right for Hamilton.
- Finally, I'd like to provide an update to the board and our residents on day to day operations, because I think that people may be unaware of what has been happening. To this point our town buildings have been closed to the public for three weeks now and we are going into our fourth week. However, virtually all necessary town services continue to be met. We have scaled back on things that are elective or non-essential, but by and large our people continue to work hard for the town. Most days there are still between 7 and 10 people at Town hall – to name just one building and our Parks and Recreation, Council on Aging, Health Department, Public Works and first responders all still show up and work everyday.

As we move into the next two weeks, when the state expects us to hit our peak in terms of numbers of new cases and numbers of fatalities, we've been pretty stable out here in Hamilton. However, the information we get both on the virus and how we should respond to it continues to change day by day.

I would like all residents to know they can continue to access town services through the town website and by calling departments, but if you don't get a person the first time you call or if it takes a day to reply to your email, please understand that we are doing our best to serve you, while also protecting our employees, their families and you as residents at the same time.

#### Updates from partners

- Roundtable with HW Schools and Sen. Tarr and Rep. Hill, the folks at the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School Committee have asked for a video-conference roundtable discussion with Senator Bruce Tarr and Representative Brad Hill regarding state funding for schools and they have offered to have the Boards of Selectmen from both towns join that roundtable discussion.  
I will pass on the conference information to each of you when it is confirmed and available.
- Working with Wenham, Wenham Town Administrator Anthony Ansaldi, on behalf of the Wenham Board of Selectmen, has asked if we could agree to a joint meeting of the two Boards of Selectmen in the coming week to discuss things such as coordination of rescheduling Town Meeting and Town Elections, budget forecasts for FY 2021, impact of now projected revenue shortfalls, decrease of state aid, etc. and a discussion about what to do with the costs of joint programs and how to cut costs in the current FY'20 year.

I'd note that some members of the Wenham Board of Selectmen may be looking to make staffing changes to save costs in the current year and that is a discussion we should have particularly where such changes might affect joint programs.

Lastly, Marisa and I have made contact with Anthony and Chris in Wenham and we are looking to have a discussion about FY'21 budget forecasts. We believe that we should begin with a joint meeting with the regional school district as any projected revenue shortfalls for the towns will likely force some reduction in spending across all town departments.

Votes needed –

- Extend tax deadlines?
- Authorize use of FEMA/ grant funds to offset deficits
- Authorize Jeff to sign Emergency Expenditures letter to DOR

Be well!