# COLUMBIA





UPDATE MARCH 2022



# TOWN OF COLUMBIA OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN

In the month of March we are still in the budget process. Budget presentations by the Superintendent of the Horace W. Porter School and the Town Administrator to the Financial Planning and Allocation Commission (FiPAC) will be held on 3/16/22 at 7:00 PM. FiPAC will have a budget workshop on 3/23/22 and 3/30/22 at their scheduled Special Meeting. We have included in this newsletter the additional budget workshop dates, Public Hearing and Annual Town Meeting dates.

Questions and comments are welcome throughout the budget review. You can email your comments or concerns to <a href="mailto:publicinput@columbiact.org">publicinput@columbiact.org</a>. The Town budget will be available in mid-April on the Town's website (<a href="mailto:www.columbiact.org">www.columbiact.org</a>), Town Clerk's office and the library. A public hearing will be held on the budget on 4/27/22 with a FiPAC Special Meeting to follow. The Annual Town Budget meeting (called by the Board of Selectmen) per the Town Charter must be held between the second Tuesday of May and the first Tuesday of June.

Thank you and please be safe.

Steven M. Everett, First Selectman severett@columbiact.org 860-228-0110



### 2022-2023 BUDGET PROCESS

#### TOWN OF COLUMBIA

#### THE BUDGET PROCESS

The budget process, which includes board meetings, workshops and public hearings, is an effort to balance how much is needed to operate the town with how much the town can afford to spend.

The annual process, which is typically finalized in May, begins many months before and included a review of the town government and education expenditures and revenues.

The town's budget begins with the Town Administrator, working with the Finance Director, receiving budget requests from the various departments, boards and commissions and external agencies. The requests are reviewed and compiled and submitted to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) for budget workshops. At the same time, the Board of Education (BOE) works with the Superintendent, Finance Director and administrative staff to develop a proposed budget for the schools.

The finalized BOS and BOE budgets are presented to the Financial Planning and Allocation Commission (FiPAC) at the budget workshops. FiPAC discusses and deliberates on the proposed budget and holds a public hearing to gather citizen input. After considering all input, FiPAC recommends its proposed budget to a Town Meeting for final vote and approval.

Upon adoption of the budget, FiPAC holds a meeting to set the mill rate.

#### **Preparing the budget December - February**

- School administrators submit budget requests to Superintendent
- The BOE, FiPAC and BOS hold Tri-Board meeting to kick-off the budget process and solicit public input.
- Town Departments submit budget requests to Town Administrator.
- Superintendent reviews budget request and submits a proposed budget to the BOE.
- The Town Administrator & First Selectman reviews all requests and submits a proposed budget to the BOS.
- BOE holds budget workshops, deliberates and approves a proposed budget.
- BOS holds budget workshops, deliberates and approves a proposed budget.

#### Reviewing the budget March- April

- BOS and BOE present budgets to FiPAC at budget workshops.
- FiPAC holds budget workshops and public hearings to gather citizen input.
- FiPAC deliberates and recommends a proposed budget to Town Meeting.

#### Adopting the budget in May

- Annual Town Budget Meeting held on proposed budget.
- Taxpayers vote on budget at Town Meeting.
- FiPAC sets mill rate.



# 2022-2023 BUDGET PROCESS TOWN OF COLUMBIA



Below are the scheduled budget events. All meetings are open to the public. Any changes to the calendar due to weather or unforeseen events will be on the Town's website at <a href="https://www.columbiact.org">www.columbiact.org</a>.

To view the Board of Education Budget Process Schedule please go to the Board of Education website at <a href="https://www.hwporter.org">www.hwporter.org</a>.

DATE	TIME	PROCESS
12/06/21	N/A	Budget Forms available to Department Heads and Board Chairs
12/15/21	7 PM	Tri-Board Meeting between FiPAC, BOE & BOS
01/07/22	4 PM	Deadline for Budget submittals online by Department Heads and Board Chairs
01/11/22-01/24/22	N/A	Town Administrator meets with Department Heads & develops Budget
01/31/22	4 PM	Town Administrator delivers budget to BOS
02/01/22	7 PM	BOS Regular Meeting – with Review of budget highlights from the Town Administrator (tentative)
02/08/22	7 PM	BOS Special Meeting – with Budget Workshop
02/15/22	7 PM	BOS Regular Meeting - with Budget Workshop
02/22/22	7 PM	BOS Special Meeting – with Budget Workshop (tentative)
03/01/22	7 PM	BOS Regular Meeting – with Budget Workshop (BOS Budget Approval to go to FiPAC)
03/10/22	4 PM	Superintendent and TA deliver Budgets to FiPAC
03/15/22	4 PM	Per Charter, last day for BOS & BOE to deliver budgets to FiPAC
03/16/22	7 PM	FiPAC Special Meeting – Budget presentations by Super & TA
03/23/22	7 PM	FiPAC Special Meeting — with Budget Workshop
03/30/22	7 PM	FiPAC Special Meeting — with Budget Workshop
04/06/22	7 PM	FiPAC Special Meeting — with Budget Workshop (tentative)
04/13/22	7 PM	FiPAC Special Meeting — with Budget Workshop (tentative)
04/14/22	4 PM	Legal Notice for 4/27/22 Public Hearing is posted & published. Budget document made available on Website, Town Clerk and Library
04/27/22	7 PM	Public Hearing on budget with FiPAC Special Meeting to follow
04/27/22	4 PM	Deadline to advertise legal notice and public notice for Budget Meeting
05/10/22	7 PM	Annual Town Budget Meeting (called by BOS). Per charter must be held between 2nd Tuesday of May and the 1st. Tuesday of June



# TOWN OF COLUMBIA OFFICE OF THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

**COVID-19 UPDATE:** The communities within the Eastern Highlands Health District are currently classified as low, the "best" classification available based on new metrics provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Community Levels can be low, medium, or high and are determined by looking at hospital beds being used, hospital admissions, and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in a specific geographical area. <a href="COVID-19 Community Levels">COVID-19 Community Levels</a> is a new tool to help communities decide what prevention steps to take based on the latest data.

CDC recommends taking precautions to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 based on the COVID-19 Community Level in your area. Because Tolland and Windham County has a low COVID-19 Community Level, residents are advised by the CDC to:

- Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines
- Get tested if you have symptoms

**COVID-19 TESTS/TESTING SITES AND N95 MASKS:** N95 Masks are available for Columbia residents at Town Hall and Yeoman's Hall during business hours located at 323 Route 87, Columbia.

The Town Hall is open on:

- Mon, Tue, and Wed. from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM
- Thursday from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM
- Friday from 8:00 AM to Noon.

N95 masks and COVID test kits are available for any Columbia resident with a disability. Residents may call the Senior Center at 860-228-0759 or the Town Administrator's Office at 860-228-0110 to request a reasonable accommodation. Please call if you are homebound, cannot drive, or have a disability which requires a reasonable accommodation.

For those seeking COVID test sites please click <u>HERE</u> or visit the <u>Eastern Highland Health</u> <u>District website</u>.

MOBILE FOOD SHARE: The Local MOBILE Foodshare location will be at the Beckish Senior Center EVERY OTHER THURSDAY from 1:00 PM to 1:30 PM. February's dates are the 10th and 24th. We are no longer doing the contact less/drive thru method for Foodshare. Please park your car and safely get in line along the sidewalk to pick up your food at the truck. Bring your own bags. A single serving per person only. No substitutes.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME—NO PERSONAL INFO REQUIRED FOR PARTICIPATION

**EVERBRIDGE NOTIFICATIONS:** We will from time to time issue an Everbridge Notification with a message from the First Selectman, Steven M. Everett to help keep you informed. If you would like to sign up for Everbridge Notifications please go to the Town's website and on the **Everbridge Notifications** tab.

**EMAIL NOTIFICATIONS:** To receive Town news please go to the Town's website and click on the **Email Notifications** tab.

If you need assistance please do not hesitate to call the Town Administrative Office or the First Selectman at 860-228-0110 or email us at <a href="mailto:townadministrator@columbiact.org">townadministrator@columbiact.org</a>.

Mark B. Walter, Town Administrator 323 Route 87 Columbia, CT 06237 860-228-0110





# UPCOMING TOWN MEETINGS

Due to the current COVID-19 Emergency, meetings will be held by utilizing remote access. Each board or committee will provide the information needed to join using an on-line conferencing platform. Please check the Town of Columbia's <a href="weekstee">website</a> for updates.

#### **UPCOMING TOWN MEETINGS**

- 3/01/22 Tue: Public Hearing American Rescue Plan Second Allocation, 6:45PM in Yeomans Hall
- 3/01/22 Tue: Board of Selectmen, 7:00 PM
- 3/01/22 Mon: Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission, 7:00 PM
- 3/02/22 Thur: Recreation Commission, 6:00 PM (Canceled)
- 3/02/22 Wed: Lake Managment Advisory Committee, 7:00 PM
- 3/03/22 Thur: Columbia Conservation and Agriculture Commission, 7:00 PM
- 3/03/22 Thur: Szegda Farm Management Committee, 9:00 AM
- 3/07/22 Mon: Board of Education, 7:30 PM
- 3/08/22 Mon: Planning and Zoning Commission, 7:00 PM
- 3/09/22 Thur: Board of Assessment Appeals, 7:00 PM
- 3/09/22 Wed: Fiscal Policy Board, 8:30 AM
- 3/09/22 Wed: Youth Service Committee, 5:30 PM
- 3/15/22 Tue: Board of Selectmen, 7:00 PM
- 3/16/22 Wed: Finanical Planning and Allocation Commission, 7:00 PM
- 3/17/22 Thur: Columbia Open Space Committe, 9:00 AM
- 3/22/22 Mon: Planning and Zoning Commission, 7:00 PM
- 3/23/22 Wed: Commission on Aging, 9:00 AM
- 3/24/22 Thur: Zoning Board of Appeals
- 3/30/22 Thur: Financial Planning and Allocation Commission Special Meeting with Budget Workshop, 7:00 PM

Public Comment will be accepted by our dedicated email at <a href="PublicInput@columbiact.">PublicInput@columbiact.</a>
org or by USPS mail to 323 Route 87, Columbia, CT 06237 and must be received prior to the meeting (public comment received after the meeting will be shared at the next meeting).

ASSESSORS OFFICE: The Renter's Relief program will begin April 1 and will run through October 1st. You will need proof of rent payments and utilities paid in the 2021 calendar year.

#### **MOTOR VEHICLE ADJUSTMENTS**

In order to have a motor vehicle bill adjusted we need **TWO** forms of proof because the tax is a car tax not a road tax.

- The first is a copy of your motor vehicle plate return receipt
- The second is something proving you got rid of the vehicle. For a list of accepted proofs look on the assessor's website or call the office.
- If you traded a vehicle and **kept the same plate** do not bring us any documentation because DMV will automatically process the adjustments.

#### **INCOME AND EXPENSE FORMS**

Connecticut General Statute 12-63c requires all owners of rental real property to annually file an Income and Expense form with the Assessor's Office by June 1st. **The information filed and furnished with this report will remain confidential and is not open to public inspection.** Any information related to the actual rental and operating expenses shall <u>not</u> be a public record and is <u>not</u> subject to the provisions of Section 1-19 (Freedom of Information) of the Connecticut General Statutes. All properties that are rented or leased, including commercial, retail, industrial, land and residential properties, except "such property used for residential purposes, containing not more than six dwelling units and in which the owner resides" must file and in the case of a non-residential property that is partially rented and partially owner-occupied.

In accordance with Section 12-63c(d), of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended, any owner of rental real property who fails to file this form or files an incomplete or false form with intent to defraud, shall be subject to a penalty assessment equal to a **Ten Percent** (10%) increase in the assessed value of such property.

The Assessor's Office is open Monday through Wednesday from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m., Thursdays 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. and Fridays 8 a.m. until Noon. Our telephone number is 228-9555.

#### **BECKISH SENIOR CENTER:**

FREE TAX PREP: Filing of IRS taxes on Thursday's until March 31st. Appointment times will start at 9am. Sign up at the Senior Center - leave your name and telephone number.



MOBILE FOODSHARE: The Mobile Foodshare will be at

the Beckish Senior Center, 188 Route 66, Columbia EVERY OTHER THURSDAY -Mar 10th, Mar 24th, April 7th, April 21st, May 5th, May 19th, June 2, June 16, June 30. FROM 1:00PM TO 1:30 PM

NOTE CHANGE: PLEASE PARK YOUR CAR, SAFELY GET IN LINE ALONG SIDEWALK TO PICK UP YOUR FOOD AT THE TRUCK. BRING YOUR OWN BAGS.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME—NO PERSONAL INFO REQUIRED FOR PARTICIPATION

**R U OK PROGRAM?** The R U OK Program is a FREE service that establishes a prearranged time for participants to receive a regular phone call inquiring about their welfare. During the call participants are asked "Are You OK?" If they answer "yes" they may simply hang up and continue with their day. If a concern is expressed, the volunteer caller will determine the nature of the concern and if some sort of response is necessary. Unanswered calls or busy signals are called back. If there is still no response after multiple tries, the volunteer caller may request that an officer be dispatched to the location for a safety check.

Anyone that would like to be apart of this program can call the senior center to be added. Volunteers: We are currently looking for volunteers to call seniors on this program on a weekly basis. If you are interested in volunteering for the program please call Bernadette at 860-228-0759 ext. 1.

Thank you

Bernadette Derring

Director Senior Services & Transportation

Municipal Agent for the Elderly

#### **FIRE MARSHAL:**

#### **OIL TANKS**

If you use oil at your residence, you likely have a metal home heating oil tank to serve your home as well. These tanks hold the oil that is used to heat your home and also usually provide hot water. Oil tanks are used year after year without much care or maintenance. Unfortunately, if your tank is outside, in a damp basement, in the garage, buried in the ground or just older in age, there could be an issue with it. Metal tanks can rust and when this happens, there is a potential for an oil leak. This is known as



a HAZMAT spill. Mediation of a HAZMAT spill can be very expensive and your insurance policy may or may not cover this type of claim.

You can help identify an oil leak by:

- 1) Seeing visible product (oil) on the ground or floor
- 2) Having a higher than normal usage of oil

If you suspect you have an issue, call the Town of Columbia Land Use Department at 860-228-0440 for more information.

Mike Lester
Fire Marshal
Town of Columbia

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS:** Provided below is important information for the winter months.

**MAILBOXES:** Please check your mailboxes before the winter snow plowing operation begins. The town's policy is that if the snowplow itself hits the mailbox it would be repaired, replaced, or offer the resident a check for \$25.00 toward its replacement. Replacement will occur after the winter season and subject to Department of Public Works schedule. However, if the snow that is discharged from the snowplow knocks down your mailbox the Public Works Department will not repair or replace it as determined by the Director of Public Works.

**SAND:** Free sand (up to 2 five-gallon containers) is available to residents during the winter months located behind the Swap Shop at the Transfer Station. Residents must provide their own container for the sand. Transfer Station is open on Wednesday's and Saturday's from 8:00-4:00 pm.

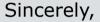
#### **SNOW REMOVAL:**

- Make sure that your roadside trash bins stay on private property and do not venture out into the road. The Town is not liable for any damage as a result of bins that get damaged by passing traffic.
- Refrain from parking in town roadways or in Municipal and School parking lots during snow events.
- Refrain from using snowmobiles, using all-terrain vehicles and engaging in snow skiing on town roadways.
- Do not plow, shovel or blow snow onto the street. Doing so creates a hazard to other motorists and to DPW snow plow operators. The chunks of ice and snow create an uneven road surface that can take drivers by surprise.
- When driving, please stay at least 200 feet behind any snow plow and never pass a plow truck as visibility is limited for the snow plow operator.
- Refrain from traveling during a storm event unless it is absolutely necessary.
- Prior to final clean-up of your driveway, check the road condition. If it does not appear to be completely clear or needs to be widened, chances are the plow may return and may push snow back into the entrance of your driveway. Waiting until the plows have finished making the roadways safe might keep you from clearing your driveway more than once.

**SOCIAL SERVICES:** We have collected an A-Z sampling of support resources that can be accessed on our website at <a href="here">here</a>. You may find something helpful for you, a family member, or a neighbor. Knowledge is power!

This is a not an exhaustive list. For further information on a topic or for information on a topic not listed, visit or call 211, United Way <a href="https://www.211ct.org/">https://www.211ct.org/</a> 24/7.

If you'd like more information on the above-mentioned programs or if they are not meeting immediate needs, or you are experiencing difficulty in receiving approval for the above-mentioned programs, please contact me to be of assistance.



Katie Wilt, Town of Columbia Community Social Services Coordinator, at 860.228.1008 or <a href="mailto:kwilt@columbiact.org">kwilt@columbiact.org</a>. (Typical office hours: Monday & Tuesday, 8:30 am-5:00 pm)

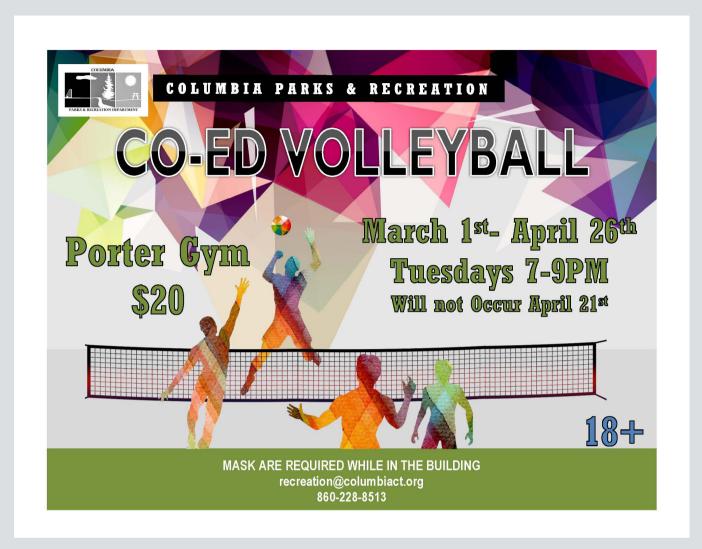


**RECREATION DEPARTMENT:** Please note that the Parks and Recreation Department is now located at the Murphy House at Columbia Lake. Follow us on <a href="FaceBook">FaceBook</a> and <a href="Instagram">Instagram</a>!

**UPCOMING EVENTS: REGISTRATION FOR PROGRAMS ONLINE AT RECDESK.** 



#### **RECREATION DEPARTMENT (Continued):**





TAX OFFICE: The second installment of the Real Estate, Personal Property and the Supplemental Motor Vehicle taxes became due on January 1, 2022. The last day to pay without a penalty was February 1, 2022. Taxes not paid on or before February 1, 2022 are charged interest at the rate of 1½% per month (18% per year) from the due date of January 1st. In March the interest will be 4.5%. The minimum interest charged is \$2.00 (per vehicle). Failure to receive a bill does not invalidate the tax or interest per CT State Statute.



Regular office hours for the TAX OFFICE: Monday through Wednesday 8:00-2:00,
Thursday 10:00-6:00 and closed on Friday.

Mailing address for tax payments:

Town of Columbia

Dept # 347

PO Box 150512

Hartford, CT 06115-0512

Drop boxes for payments and correspondence are located at the right side of the entrance of the Town Hall and in front of Yeoman's Hall. The drop boxes are emptied at 8:00AM each weekday, weekend tax payments are processed on Monday. Please be aware that tax payments put in the drop box **after** 8:00AM will be processed the next day the **Tax Office** is open.

You can view and pay taxes online. Service fees for tax payments are, .95 cents to use a bank account and 2.95% for credit and debit cards.

To find your tax bills online:

- go to www.columbiact.org and click on the Pay Taxes Online tab.
- on the next page click on the square that says VIEW/PAY TAX BILLS.
- the search criteria will need to be entered exactly how the tax bill is written last name,
   space, and your first initial.

To look up your 2021 tax payments, follow the directions at the bottom of the Tax Collector'spage. You can also utilize this site to look up your payment history. Locate your bill using the instructions above, then hover over the icons in the option column and select tax payment history. If you have any problems using the online system, please contact the Tax Office at 860-228-0230 or <a href="mailto:taxcollector@columbiact.org">taxcollector@columbiact.org</a> and we will gladly assist you.

FOR THOSE SEEKING AN IMMEDIATE CLEARANCE FOR DMV due to delinquent taxes please contact the Tax Office at 860-228-0230 or <a href="mailto:taxcollector@columbiact.org">taxcollector@columbiact.org</a> for information on the process. Paying the tax bill online does not clear you immediately at DMV. You will need to contact the tax office during the tax office hours for assistance.

Please call the tax office at 860-228-0230 with questions.

Carol Price, Tax Collector

**TOWN CLERKS OFFICE:** Our office is back to business as usual for all those services that you might need!! – Recording and Searching of Land Records and Maps, Certified copies of Vital Records, Marriage licenses, Fishing and Hunting licenses, Dog licenses, Transfer Station stickers, etc.

For your convenience, a large white drop box is located outside the doors to **Yeoman's Hall.** This box can be used to drop off items for the Town Clerk and is shared with other offices in Town Hall. While masks are now optional when entering Town Hall, we continue to encourage social distancing when possible.

We are **EXCITED** to announce the Codification of the Town of Columbia's ordinances!! The Town Clerk's office received a grant from the CT State Library's Historic Documents Preservation Program for this project. The entire process, from Material Review to Town Approval (Adoption of the Code on August 3, 2021) to Delivery, has been a great undertaking but has assembled the Town's rules and regulations in a format that is clear, concise and easily accessible to all. Look for the Code on the website real soon – more details to follow!!

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call us or reach out to us by email – Robin (townclerk@columbiact.org) or Gail (atownclerk@columbiact.org). We are happy to help!!

**SAXTON B. LITTLE LIBRARY:** Spring is coming soon! We can't wait. We have a lot of good programs coming and, we are already planning Summer Reading.

Story times are still taking place virtually Tuesday mornings at 10:30 am. Baby Bees are continuing virtually Friday mornings at 10:30. Call or stop in the Library for a standing Zoom code. Weather permitting – both of these groups will begin meeting in person outside by the end of the month.

Our book groups, weekly Stitcher group and bi-monthly Writer's group are all accepting new members. We already have a patron successfully complete our Read Around The Library challenge – will you be next? This month we are offering Zoom programs for adults and kids. On 3/23 we'll be offering Five Things You Need to Know To Retire With Confidence and on 3/24 join us for an exciting game of Book Bingo!

We are also excited to be starting a new on-going program: Spice Club; pick up a sample of an unusual spice, some recipe ideas, test them out and then join us to learn more and compare notes.

Visit our website at: <a href="https://www.columbiactlibrary.org">www.columbiactlibrary.org</a>. Call us: (860) 228-0350 or email: <a href="https://www.columbiactlibrary.org">SBL@</a>

Stay safe, we look forward to seeing you!

Sue Epstein, Library Director

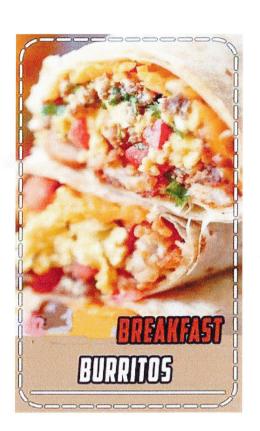
columbia volunteer fire Department: Community members can help the volunteers who respond to calls by clearly marking your house number in a visible manner on the street. The CVFD makes and sells reflective house number signs that help us quickly and easily identify your house; this often saves precious time. To order the Reflective Address Markers please go to the Columbia Volunteer Fire Department's webpage at <a href="https://www.columbiafire5.org">www.columbiafire5.org</a> and download the printable form or you can fill out the electronic form online. The price is \$10.00 per sign or \$12.00 with mounting brackets.

EMT's and Firefighters Needed!









Breakfast sandwiches or Breakfast burritos, and coffee to go!

Saturday March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 7:00A.M.-11:00A.M. Beckish Senior Center 188 Route 66. Columbia, CT

Drive thru service only just roll down the rear window or open up the car trunk.

(Please have the exact amount ready to give to your servers whether CASH or CHECK.)

\$6: Sandwich, coffee

\$8: Burritos, coffee

2 Sandwich and 2 coffee for \$10.

2 Burritos and 2 coffee for \$15.

Sandwich and Burritos and 2 coffee for \$12.

**COLUMBIA LITTLE LEAGUE:** Columbia Little League registration is now open.

The 2021 baseball/softball season is upon us! Registration opens on February 1st. There are a few exciting changes this year. First, we will be combining with Lebanon Little League to have combined teams. This will help our teams be more age-appropriate (more fun for the kids) and will ensure players are competing at the correct skill level



(safer for our players). It will allow us to play more games as well. Second, there will be COVID guidelines that all parents, players, and coaches will have to follow. The guidelines will be sent at a later date. Third, this year all parents will be required to volunteer in some capacity. Volunteering will assist in providing a wonderful experience for all players. Some examples of volunteer jobs are raking a field between games, helping to organize a fundraiser or special event, or volunteering an hour or two in the snack shack. There will be a list of opportunities available shortly for sign up. If you have any questions, comments or concerns please do not hesitate to reach out.

We look forward to seeing you all on the field again! Play Ball!! Please visit <u>www.</u> <u>columbialittleleague.org</u> for more information and to register.

COLUMBIA LITTLE LEAGUE

P.O. Box 93

Columbia, Connecticut 06237

Phone: 860-391-3219

Email: ColumbiaLLPresident@gmail.com