



Town of Columbia, CT
Response to the COVID-19 Health Crisis

Operations Guide
Updated April 14, 2020

9:00 AM

Introduction

The Town of Columbia has compiled the information found within for the purposes of informing the public of what services they can expect to receive from the town government during the COVID-19 national health emergency. If you have questions about this guide, please refer them to the Selectmen's Office.

Contact Us

Town Department Contact Information: *Some department staff may be working from home or out sick on any given day. If you don't reach the party you're looking for, please leave a message and staff will get back to you within 24 hours. If you have urgent business with the town that absolutely cannot wait, please call 860-228-0110.*

Department	Phone #/Extension	Email Address	Page #
Assessor	860-228-9555	mlavallee@columbiact.org	3
Building & Land Use Department	860-228-0440	LandUse@columbiact.org	5
Education (Horace Porter School)	860-228-9493	mgeryk@hwporter.org	6
Finance	860-228-8423	bciurylo@columbiact.org	
Fire (CVFD)	860-228-9602	pstarkel@columbiafire5.org	7
Fire Marshal	860-228-0440	firemarshal@columbiact.org	8
Highway	860-228-4270	gmurphy@columbiact.org	
Library	860-228-0350	SBL@columbiactlibrary.org	9
Recreation	860-228-8513	recreation@columbiact.org	10
Sanitarian (Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD))	860-228-0440 860-649-8066 x108	gbagdoian@ehhd.org	11
First Selectmen & Town Administrator's Office	860-228-0110	townadministrator@columbiact.org	12
Senior Center	860-228-0759	beckish@columbiact.org	13
Social Services	860-450-7400 Ext. 7418	YolandaIrezarry@accessagency.org	14
Tax Collection	860-228-0230	taxcollector@columbiact.org	15
Town Clerk	860-228-3284	townclerk@columbiact.org or gmcgrath@columbiact.org	16
EMERGENCY	911		
Agency	Service	Phone #/Extension	Email Address
Willimantic Waste	Trash & Recycling Pickup	860-423-4527	info@williwaste.com
Animal Control	Animal Control	860-337-1222	townadministrator@columbiact.org
Eversource	Electricity	800-286-2000	
Probate Court	Probate Court	860-647-3227	

Non-Town Agency Contact Information

Connect with Us:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TownofColumbiaCT/>

Visit our website, Columbiact.org, to sign-up for our emergency notification system.

Assessor's Office

Operations are continuing normally, though the public is encouraged to submit information electronically whenever possible. Mail or hard-copy drop-off is still permissible, though not advised.

Property cards are available online at

<https://crocog.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ed798533e6fd4304b2bef1f28e95c06f>

Just copy link above and past in your browser search line

If you no longer own a vehicle, you can mail, scan and email or place in our mail slot at the Town Hall, your cancellation of plates and the bill of sale to:

Columbia Tax Assessor

323 Route 87

Columbia, CT 06237

Inquiries can be made by phone or email.

Phone: (860) 228-9555

Email: mlavallee@columbiact.org

Buildings & Grounds

Town Hall

Entrance by the public available by appointment only. Screening conducted to ensure those entering are not ill, including a line of questions regarding virus exposure and potentially a non-invasive temperature screening. Staff working within the facility to provide services while minimizing exposure to others.

Senior Center

Facility closed to the public until further notice; staff working within to provide services.

Saxton B. Little Free Library

Facility closed to the public until further notice.

Firehouse

Facility only open to volunteer firefighters.

Horace W. Porter School

Facilities closed to all until further notice. For information about use of the grounds, please contact the Board of Education.

Rec Park

Grounds are open to the public; facility is closed except in special circumstances. Please note that social distancing is recommended even in open parks, and that group sizes should be kept to an absolute minimum.

The use of the playground equipment is prohibited.

Building/Land Use Department

Changes to Daily Operations

- We will remain open for phone calls. The office will be closed to the public, but we will be taking applications by postal mail and email (LandUse@columbiaact.org).
- Please click [here](#) for all permit paperwork.
- Please call or email ahead to verify permit fees (by check only, made out to Town of Columbia), or to address other questions. Work that is to be done by a contractor must include a copy of their State license, and certificate of insurance with workman's comp, and should include a signed authorization from the property owner. Inspections will be carried out by appointment only for exterior inspections as well as inspections of non-occupied structures (new construction/additions) will continue.

Permitting & Inspection Information

- Inspections will be carried out by appointment as always but with the following restrictions; interior inspections of occupied buildings for items such as, but not limited to, kitchen/bath remodels, ac or furnace replacements, or other minor interior repairs/alterations will **not** be completed at this time. Please remember to call when the emergency passes. All exterior inspections as well as inspections of non-occupied structures (new construction/additions) will continue.
- We are making our best effort to protect Public and Staff health while maintaining some level of progress. I sincerely hope this is not too much of an inconvenience and that we all stay well.

Education

First and foremost, the Columbia school community would like to wish everyone good health during these difficult times. If you require educational assistance please contact Maria Geryk, Superintendent at mgeryk@hwporter.org with concerns or questions.

- H.W. Porter will begin **REMOTE** learning Wednesday, March 25th. The link can be accessed on the Porter [website](#).
- **Board of Education Meetings** - We are working towards providing information as soon as possible so the community can participate in meetings from their homes.
- **EASTCONN Food Services** is providing meals which are available to all Columbia students.

[Student Meal Information](#)

Please find additional details and resources on our website:

<https://www.hwporter.org/>

Columbia Volunteer Fire Department

In the ongoing effort to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 corona virus, the Columbia Volunteer Fire Department is modifying their response plans and procedures to assist you and protect them during the COVID-19 outbreak. The 9-1-1 Dispatch Center has implemented a screening process to ask callers requesting the assistance of fire, medical, or police resources additional questions in order to prepare and advise responding personnel. Please answer all of their questions. The most important thing residents should know is that if you call 9-1-1, the fire department's first priority is the safety of the residents and visitors of Columbia and that we are going to respond in the same manner that we always have. Depending on the type of alarm, you may see our firefighters take a few extra precautions as we work to avoid being exposed to this virus while providing you with the proper service. On some calls, a single firefighter or emergency medical responder, will come to the door and ask about the health of those in the home. If anyone in the home has a fever, flu-like symptoms or has traveled to certain areas, that firefighter/ EMS person will take extra time to take precautions, such as putting on some protective medical equipment.

The hospitals have recently changed their visitor policy. Please call ahead for instructions if you are going to go to any of the health care facilities.

Effective immediately the firehouse is restricted to Columbia Fire Department personnel only. This is in effort to protect the general public as well as first responders. If you have questions concerning any fire department business, you can contact us by calling 860-228-9602 or emailing us.

In case of an emergency, please dial 911 immediately.

Thank you for your understanding and your continued support of the Columbia Volunteer Fire Department.

Respectfully,

Chief Peter Starkel

pstarkel@columbiafire5.org

Fire Marshal's Office

Fire Marshal's Office

- Burn permit requests can be submitted by phone, or emailed to LandUse@columbiact.org and must include your name, address and phone number.
- The office will continue to investigate all fire emergencies within the town, perform building and site plan reviews for commercial projects, along with field inspections to obtain a Certificate of Occupancy and issue open burning permits.
- Until further notice existing building inspections will not be scheduled, unless requested by the owner.
- Anyone needing the services of the Fire Marshal or Open Burning Official are asked to contact the Town of Columbia Land Use Department at 860-228-0440 during normal business hours M-Th 8-4 & F 8-noon.
- For emergency situations after business hours, please call 9-1-1.

Library

Changes to Daily Operations

For all of our health and safety, the Library is *COMPLETELY CLOSED* until further notice. We are working from home. This means our book drops are currently locked. **PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE ANY MATERIALS HERE!** Please keep them until further notice. We trust that you will take care of them for us and appreciate that you are helping us in this way.

NOTE: NO FINES WILL ACCUMULATE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE!!!

Our sister organization, the Friends of the Library are not accepting donations until further notice. Please do not leave any donations or they will be thrown out.

These are trying times. We thank you for your patience and support.

In the interim, updates about the Library, information you might need, and distraction are as follows:

- We are sending out one issue of our digital newsletter each week with updates about the Library and things of interest, such as virtual story times, new online materials, etc. Sign up can be found on the left column of our website (www.columbiactlibrary.org)
- We are keeping up the Library's Facebook page (@saxtonblibrary). Since we know that many other organizations are pushing lots of content, we're keeping it down to a couple posts a day. For those who are not members, our Facebook page is public.
- News, information and items of interest are also being updated every few days on our website.

Our thoughts and prayers are with you. Please note that during this time, Library Staff are actively developing creative ways to assist our patrons as public health concerns continue.

If you have questions, just want to know we're here or what to chat, write us.

We have a dedicated email for these times: SBL@columbiactlibrary.org, but feel free to email any staff member.

Recreation Department

Due to the precautions being taken to protect our community from the spread of the COVID-19, the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department has decided to cancel all upcoming programs and events. The Parks & Recreation Department will reschedule programs and return to our usual schedule in the upcoming weeks, as long as it is safe to do so. Please check the Town of Columbia's website for up-to-date notifications. Thank you and we appreciate your patience. Please stay safe and healthy.

We will be releasing weekly/bi-weekly contest that allow residents to compete and participate virtually with the community. For more information check your emails, our facebook page and the Recreation page on the town website for more information.

We look forward to being able to get back to our regularly scheduled programming and interacting with the great residents of our community!

Contact the Parks and Recreation Department:

Phone: 860-228-8513

Email: recreation@columbiact.org

Sanitarian/Health Department

(Eastern Highlands Health District)

Health Department Forms

- Hard copies can be picked up at Town Hall by appointment.
- Forms are available on the Eastern Highlands Health District website, ehhd.org.
- Forms will also be sent electronically if requested.

General COVID-19 Information (info from CT Department of Public Health)

- Symptoms can include fever, cough, fatigue, and shortness of breath.
 - If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and other symptoms, such as cough or difficulty breathing, call your healthcare provider for medical advice.
- The virus is spread from person-to-person, via close contact (within a six-foot radius) and through respiratory droplets produced when an infected individual sneezes or coughs.
 - Transmission can also occur when a person touches an infected surface and then touches their eyes, mouth, or nose.

General COVID-19 Prevention

- Avoid person-to-person contact as much as possible.
- Wash your hands often. If using hand sanitizer, it should be comprised of at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with your unwashed hands.
- Stay home if you are feeling ill.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Clean and disinfect regularly.

First Selectmen & Town Administrator

Services Still Offering

- Staff will be present in the office to answer phone calls and emails until further notice.
- The Transfer Station is still open Wednesday and Saturday but ONLY for household waste, electronics and recyclables. Bulky waste, Library book donations, bottles and cans for the Scouts, brush or tires are not accepted at this time. To protect our employees and the public the Swap Shop will be closed. No exchange of currency will be conducted.
- All public meetings will be coordinated by the Administrator until further notice, and all such meetings that are held shall be accessible remotely.
- Policy development will continue on behalf of the Board of Selectmen as expected.
- All Human Resources inquiries will be managed without hindrance.
 - Any individual called for an interview with the town shall be given instructions on how to connect with the Selection Committee via phone or Zoom meeting rather than in-person.
- Public health and wellness notifications will continue to be shared on social media and via other means as necessary.

Services Not Currently Offering

- Facilities are not being rented out or otherwise reserved until further notice.
- Pistol permitting has been suspended temporarily by the state government.
- Fingerprinting services are no longer being offered by the state.

Contact Info

- Phone: 860-228-0110
- Email: townadministrator@columbiact.org

Senior Center

In the ongoing effort to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 corona virus, the Beckish Senior Center and Transportation Program are closed to the public until further notice. The Beckish Senior Center will be open on Mondays and Tuesdays from 8-3pm for donations to the food pantry to help those in need in town. The Meal on Wheels program is still on going, and we are now accepting new clients in Columbia. Tuesdays will be the delivery day for all Meal on Wheel (MOW) clients and those who rely on the congregate meal program. I will also be making deliveries to those in need on Tuesdays between 11am and 1pm.

All trips for March and April are canceled –

No Transportation Services

No Congregate meals

Please call the Beckish Senior Center at 860-228-0759 for any questions or concerns. Please check the town website www.columbiact.org and Beckish Senior Center Facebook page for future updates.

Contact Info

- Phone: 860-228-0759
- Email: beckish@columbiact.org

Social Services

Services Still Offering

- Staff is available by phone.

Services Not Currently Offering

- The building is closed to the public.

Contact Info

- Phone: 860-450-7400 Ext. 7418
- Email: Yolanda.irizarry@accessagency.org

Tax Collector's Office

860-228-0230

taxcollector@columbiact.org

Town of Columbia Website: <https://www.columbiact.org/>

To Pay Online and 2019 Tax Payment Information click [here](#).

The Town of Columbia, in partnership with Invoice Cloud, is excited to offer residents an easy and secure way to view, print and pay their real estate, personal property and motor vehicle tax bills online.

Another way of paying taxes is to call ahead to the tax collector's office to ensure the department is staffed and when we can expect your arrival. Payments can be put in the key box outside the front door of the Town Hall. At this time, I would ask that payment be made with a bank check or money order if motor vehicle clearance is needed before 2 weeks. I am requesting that cash NOT be used at this time.

Motor vehicle clearance will be on a case-by-case basis. Please be prepared and pay your taxes at least a month before you need to register a vehicle to make sure the release will be able to be processed.

Many questions regarding tax bills can also be found on the town website or call us at the number above.

Please direct phone calls regarding selling, junked, or totaled vehicles to the Assessor's office at 860-228-9555.

Best regards,

Carol Price

Tax Collector

Town of Columbia

Town Clerk

Updated 4/14/20

Services Still Offering

- Vital record requests (certified copies) via mail.
 - Funeral Home directors/representatives are requested to call our office to make arrangements.
- Dog licensing via mail.
 - Please go to the Town Clerk's page at www.columbiact.org for more information.
- Land Record Recordings, Trade Names and Name Changes via Mail, UPS, Fed-Ex.
 - Attorneys with Warranty deeds, Quit-Claim deeds, etc. should contact our office.
- Online land records searches (with images) available through Record Hub (COTT) remotely on a temporary basis for the next 90 days (approx. mid-June 2020) then back to Index only.
- Maps are not online – Please call our office to get emailed copies.
- Voter Registration can be done online via SOTS website.
 - <https://voterregistration.ct.gov/OLVR/welcome.do>
- Voicemails received will be answered as soon as possible.

Alternatives

- Inquiries about **Notary Services** – Please call the Town Clerk's office for more information. We also ask that you check with the UPS stores or your local bank to see if they are offering these services.
- Inquiries about **Marriage Licenses** - Please go to the Town Clerk's page at www.columbiact.org for more information.
- **Processing of Marriage license applications** – Please call the Town Clerk's office for more information.
- Inquiries about **Liquor Permits** - Please call the Town Clerk's office for more information.

Contact Information

- Phone: 860-228-3284
- Email: townclerk@columbiact.org
- Email: atownclerk@columbiact.org