

# COLUMBIA



UPDATE MAY 2020



# TOWN OF COLUMBIA

## OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN

As we enter the month of May we are still faced with the day-to-day realities of living with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It has affected us in so many ways. Many people in our community have been laid-off or placed on furlough. Many people are working remotely and our schools are providing "distance learning" for their students.

The changes that we are all facing are difficult and concerning. We are a strong community and we will get through this together.

Many of our town services are still up and running and we are here for you. The town hall is closed to the public but we encourage the public to visit the Town website at [www.columbiact.org](http://www.columbiact.org). I will also be providing weekly live updates on the Town of Columbia [YouTube](#) channel and on our [Facebook](#) page.

**BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS:** Boards and Committees have implemented remote access to meetings via video conferencing using online platforms such as Zoom Meeting. Each Board or Committee will post login information for that meeting on the Town's website. As a resident you will be able to join the meeting from your internet connection thru a PC or Cell phone. The COVID-19 emergency hit during peak budget season, which has posed some challenges. Governor Lamont has issued Executive Orders that help towns and municipalities meet their budget obligations. Please note: While Executive Order 7I Budget Adoption, Section 13, still contemplates that the Town agencies will continue to make budget presentations and hold hearings, it prohibits town meetings and referenda for purposes of adopting the 2020-2021 fiscal year municipal budgets and setting the mill rate. The legislative body of the town – or, in Columbia, the Board of Selectmen because the town meeting is the legislative body – shall authorize the budget-making authority of the town to adopt a budget and set a mill rate. The budget-making authority is obligated to make reasonable efforts to reach out to the public and receive comments.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOU? The Board of Selectmen (BOS) and the Financial Planning & Allocation Commission (FiPAC) will be conducting their meetings via on-line video conferencing. We will be posting login information on the Town's website so that you

can attend the meetings. Budget documents will be available on the Town's website for review and public comments will be accepted by email at [PublicInput@columbiact.org](mailto:PublicInput@columbiact.org) or by USPS mail and must be received prior to the meeting. The Host of the meeting will control the audio ability of allowing residents to comment. Based on the meeting agenda comments may be limited to certain times. If typing a comment on the "Chat" feature or sending a comment in on the [PublicInput@columbiact.org](mailto:PublicInput@columbiact.org), always include your name and address.

Executive Order 7S allows certain municipal financial actions to be taken without complying with any town meeting requirements that may be imposed by statute, charter, ordinance or otherwise. As with the previous executive order 7I dealing with the budget adoption process, the intent is to eliminate the need for large numbers of individuals to gather in order to satisfy those town meeting or referendum requirements.

EO 7S permits the Board of Selectmen, together with the budget-making authority of the municipality (FIPAC), by a majority vote of each body, to authorize any supplemental, special or additional appropriations in an amount less than one percent (1%) of the current total municipality budget under CGS 7-348 or any comparable provisions of any special act, charter, or ordinance without a town meeting or referendum if one or both of those would be required.

The upcoming **Public Hearing on the budget will be held on May 13, 2020 at 7:00pm** and the **final vote on the budget and the setting of the mill rate will be on May 20, 2020 at 7:00pm**. Login details will be posted on the website.

**COLUMBIA VOLUNTEER FIRE AMBULANCE:** The Columbia Volunteer Fire Chief has asked that residents please limit the use of the ambulance for non-emergencies. Do not call the ambulance if you think you might have COVID-19, or that you have been exposed, or are displaying symptoms. Please call your healthcare provide, 211, or the Hartford Healthcare Corona virus hotline at 860-621-0600. Call the ambulance if you have difficulty breathing, chest pains or other potentially life threatening symptoms.

**GATHERING IN GROUPS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING:** The Governor has issued an Executive Order that states the local authority, state police, or local law enforcement can levy fines up to \$1,000 per occasion for people that do not obey the restrictions on all social and recreational gatherings to no more than five people. For the safety of your family and friends please follow these rules. I would also like to remind you to please adhere to the social distancing rules; stay 6 feet apart, wear cloth face coverings or higher level of protection required in public wherever close contact is unavoidable.

**2020 BEACH PASSES:** The 2020 season beach passes will not be available until the Town can safely open the beach due to the COVID-19 emergency. Please check the [Recreation Departments website](#) for updates. The boat launch will remain open and the gate monitoring schedule is addressed under the Recreation Departments information in this newsletter on page 17.

**DEFERRED PROGRAM FOR TAXPAYERS:** On April 21, 2020, the Town of Columbia adopted the "Deferred Program" for all taxpayers. Escrow Companies do not qualify for the program. The Executive Order (EO) requires Landlords to apply for the program and is explained under the Tax Departments information in this newsletter on page 15.

**THE TOWN OF COLUMBIA IS NOW ACCEPTING ONLINE DONATIONS** through the [Recreation Departments Programs page](#). The donations are to assist those in need during the COVID-19 pandemic. Donations may be used for food supply, fuel assistance, protective equipment and other social services that will benefit those affected by COVID-19.

Thank you for your patience and please be safe.

Steven M. Everett, First Selectman

# TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S MONTHLY UPDATE

## **MAY 2020**

The Town of Columbia has compiled an [Operations Guide](#) that will provide the public on 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 at 860-228-0110.



### **RESIDENT STATE TROOPERS OFFICE HAS**

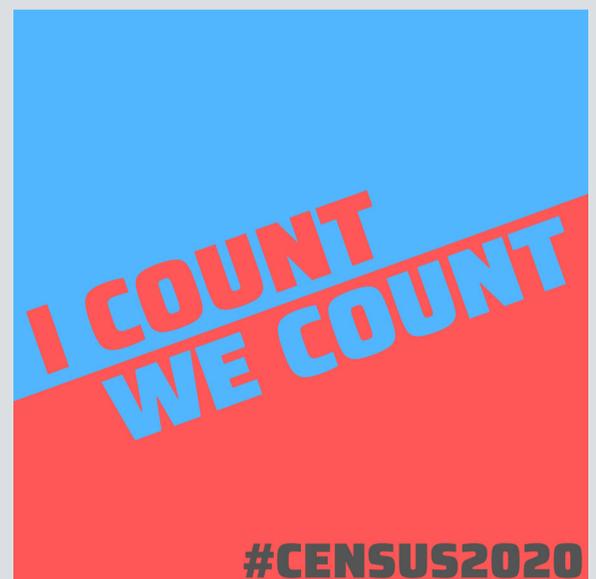
**MOVED:** The Columbia Resident Trooper's Office is now located in the annex building behind town hall and next to the finance office. As a result of the move the number to the office has changed and now is 860-228-6845 ext 195

The Town has set up a dedicated page on our website for updates and information regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Please click on [CORONAVIRUS \(COVID-19\) TAB](#) on the website.

**FOODSHARE UPDATES:** Free Food Distribution at Rentschler Field Weekdays from April 27th to May 8th from 8:30AM to 12:00PM. For more information please go to the Foodshare coronavirus website page [here](#).

**COLUMBIA VIEWS:** The Columbia Views will be coming out soon. Please look for it in your mailbox.

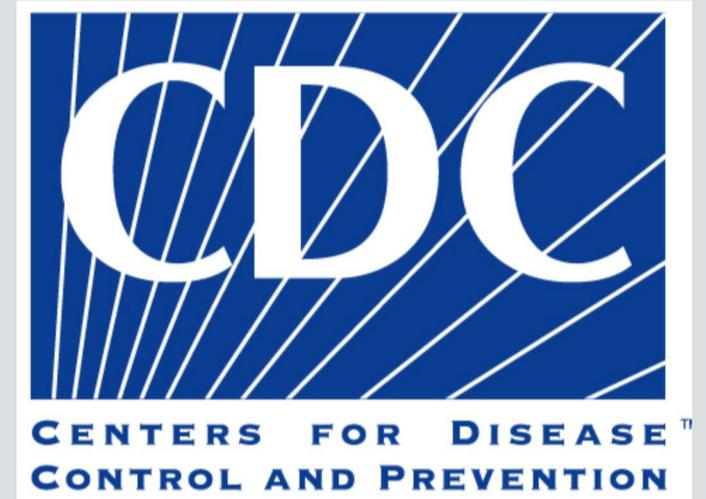
**CENSUS:** We'd like to remind residents that the 2020 Census is happening now. You can complete your questionnaire on-line, by phone, or by mail. To find out how, please go to the [Census website](#).



**BOAT LAUNCH GATE KEY:** We have implemented a new procedure for obtaining Gate Keys. Residents can fill out the application and test on-line through the Rec Department's web page. Go to [ReckDesk](#) click on Programs and then scroll down to Boat Launch Gate Key Application. This will take you through the Boat Launch Gate Key Application, Test and payment feature. We will call you to arrange the pickup of the key at the Town Hall.

**IMPORTANT LINKS FOR ASSISTANCE AND INFORMATION RELATED TO COVID-19**

**CORONA VIRUS:** As the details of the COVID-19 outbreak change and the likelihood of community transmission increases, Easter Highland Health District (EHHD) has real-time information on their website [www.ehhd.org](http://www.ehhd.org) with an embedded link to the CDC (COVID-19 Information from the CDC).



If you have specific questions please contact EHHD directly at (860) 429-3325.

- [Statewide: FAQ regarding the State of CT's actions related to COVID-19 from Governor Lamont's office](#)
- [Bridge Recovery Loans for Small Businesses](#)
- [Unemployment claims due to COVID-19](#)

**THE TRANSFER STATION:** THE FIRST SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH, STARTING SATURDAY, MAY 2, 2020 THE TRANSFER STATION WILL BE ACCEPTING THE FOLLOWING:

- BULKY WASTE
- METAL
- BRUSH, MAXIMUM 2-INCHES IN DIAMETER
- LEAVES
- ELECTRONICS

**THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED:**

- MATTRESSES
- WOOD OVER 2-INCHES IN DIAMETER
- OIL
- SWAP SHOP ITEMS
- PROPANE BOTTLES
- TIRES
- BATTERIES
- CLOTHING
- BOOKS
- BOTTLE AND CAN DONATIONS FOR SCOUTING ORGANIZATIONS

THE TRANSFER STATION WILL CONTINUE TO ACCEPT HOUSEHOLD WASTE AND RECYCLABLES. THE SWAP SHOP WILL REMAIN CLOSED. NO BOTTLE RETURNS, BOOKS OR CLOTHING WILL BE ACCEPTED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

**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.

The health of our residents, staff, and families are our top priority. Please stay home and stay safe and we will get through this together. 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 [townadministrator@columbiact.org](mailto:townadministrator@columbiact.org).

Thank you,

Mark B. Walter, Town Administrator

323 Route 87

Columbia, CT 06237

860-228-0110

[townadministrator@columbiact.org](mailto:townadministrator@columbiact.org)

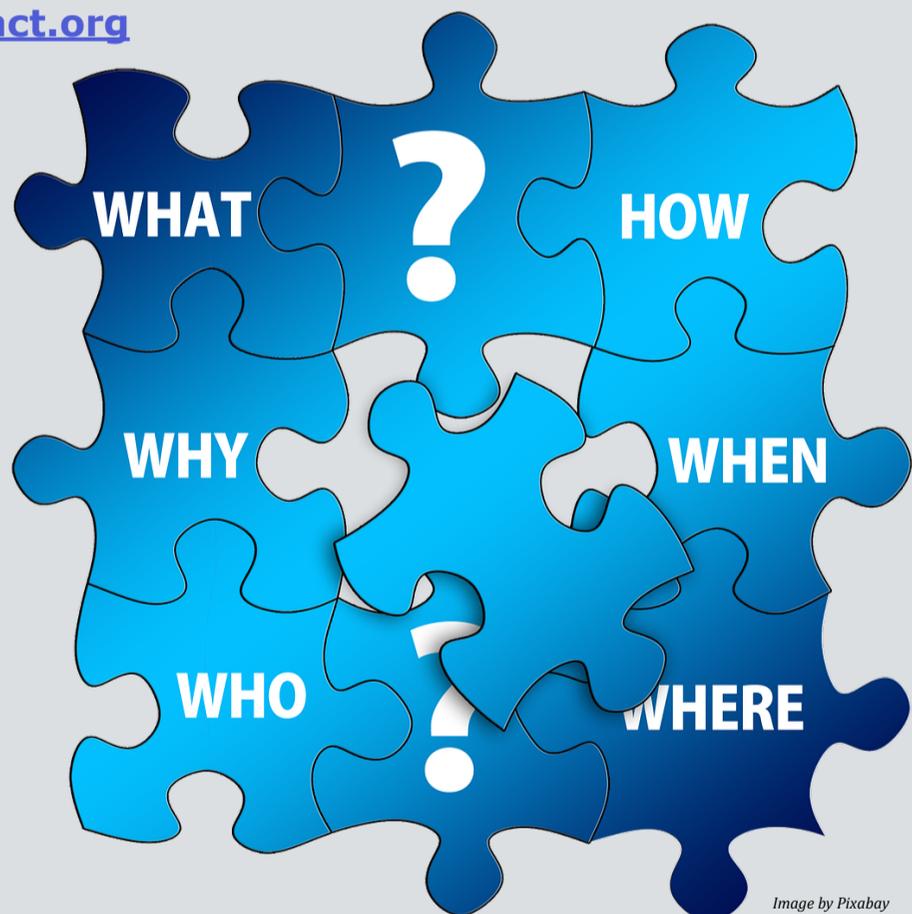


Image by Pixabay

Find us on 

# 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 [website](#) for updates.**

# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## REGISTRAR OF VOTERS:

### **PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY 8/11/20**

The Presidential Primary is a Primary is to determine which candidates will appear on the Presidential ballot in November. The Republican and Democratic Primary has been postponed to August 11, 2020 and will be held at HORACE W PORTER SCHOOL. Please check the Registrar of Voters page on the town website for registration deadlines and other election information.



For information about obtaining an Absentee Ballot, please contact the Town Clerk at (860) 228-3284.

Please check our [Registrar of Voters](#) page on the Town website or contact our office for more information.

Registrars of Voters

Karen Butzgy – Democratic

Katherine Morrison – Republican

(860) 228-6843 x113

***registrar@columbiact.org***

**ASSESSOR'S 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 2019 calendar year.

**Homeowners Elderly Relief Program:** If you filed for the Homeowners elderly relief program in 2017, you do not need to file this year due to the Governor's order. It allows our office to automatically approve you as reapplying. If you are new to the program you will still need to apply by May 15th. Please call our office and we will instruct you on what you need to supply our office and how to get that to us.

# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## (Continued)

**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. This deadline has been extended do to the Governors order to August 15th.

**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 not be a public record and is not 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 personnel is available Monday through Wednesday from 8 a.m. until noon, Thursdays 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. and Fridays 8 a.m. until Noon. Our telephone number is 228-9555. Email is [mflavallee@columbiact.org](mailto:mflavallee@columbiact.org)

# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION (Continued)

**BECKISH SENIOR CENTER:** The senior center is assisting up to 60-80 residents per week and making phone calls to over 350 seniors every other day. We are also assisting in every



way possible to make sure all needs are met. We are now delivering masks to seniors and families who need to head out to medical appointments or anywhere in public. Donations are coming in both monetarily and food drop off. In the ongoing effort to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), the Beckish Senior Center and Transportation Program are closed to the public until further notice. The Beckish Senior Center will be

open on Tuesdays from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm for donations to the food pantry to help those in need. We are asking if gift cards could be donated to help those with special dietary needs. It has been said that gift cards are the safer choice of donation during this time to prevent further spread of COVID-19. 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 Wheels (MOW) clients and those who rely on the congregate meal program. Senior Center Staff will also be making deliveries to those in need on Tuesdays between 11am and 2pm. The Director, Bernadette Derring will also be available by phone or email Monday - Friday 8-3pm or those who might need items on non-delivery days. Please call to request items in need.

All trips for April, May and June are canceled

All Senior Center programs are canceled until further notice. (Podiatrist, diabetes and memory clinics, blood pressure clinics etc..)

No Transportation Services

No Congregate meals

# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## (Continued)

Monetary Donations: If anyone would like to donate to the Columbia Food Pantry, please write a check to "Town of Columbia" and mail to 188 Route 66 Columbia, CT 06237. Gift cards of any type (Visa, Mastercard, American Express, Teds IGA, Walmart, Aldis, Stop & Shop etc...) can also be sent to the above address. You can also make an on-line donation using the link on the front page of the Columbia website at [www.columbiact.org](http://www.columbiact.org) Thank you!

Please call the Beckish Senior Center at 860-228-0759 for any questions or concerns.

Contact Info:

Bernadette Derring – Director Senior Services & Transportation

Phone: 860-228-0759 ext. 1 (Only use extension 1)

Email: [beckish@columbiact.org](mailto:beckish@columbiact.org)

Please check the town website [www.columbiact.org](http://www.columbiact.org), Beckish Senior Center Facebook page , as well as The Gem Newsletter for future updates.

**BUILDING/LAND USE DEPARTMENT:** We will remain open for phone calls. We can be reached at 860-228-0440. The office will be closed to the public, but we will be taking applications by postal mail and email [LandUse@columbiact.org](mailto:LandUse@columbiact.org). Permits or applications for land use can be safely dropped off in the lock box located by the front entrance to Yeomans Hall. The box is checked every morning. Please make sure that the envelope is clearly marked with your contact information.

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.

# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION (Continued)

**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, air conditioner 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 the public and staff health while maintaining some level of progress.

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS: TRANSFER STATION PERMITS (STICKERS):** 2019 permits expire June 1, 2020. 2020 permits are available for purchase May 1, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 emergency, stickers can be purchased on-line at the [Recreation Departments website](#) or mail the application to the Town Clerk at 323 Rte. 87, Columbia, CT 06237.

Applications are available at the Transfer Station or on the [Town's website](#). Please include a self-addressed stamped envelope if mailing and allow two weeks for receipt of stickers. Applications can also be dropped off at the drop box located at Yeomans Hall.

The standard permit price (2 stickers) is \$40 per household for non-seniors and \$20 per household for seniors (62 and over). Up to 2 additional stickers may be purchased at \$20 each. At the time of this mailing the Town Hall is not open. Please check the [Town's website](#) for information on when Town Hall will be open to the public.

**TAX OFFICE:** 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 on-line.

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.



# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## (Continued)

At this time, the Tax Office is requesting that payment be made with a bank check or money order if motor vehicle clearance is needed before 2 weeks. Please do NOT make your payment with cash.

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.

### **Section 6, Executive Order 7S and Section 1, Executive Order 7W Suspension and Modification of Tax Deadlines and Collection Efforts due to COVID-19**

On April 21, 2020, the Town of Columbia adopted the "Deferred Program" for all taxpayers. Escrow Companies do not qualify for the program. The Executive Order (EO) requires Landlords to apply for the program and is explained below.

"Think of this program as an extended grace period program. What is "deferred" is not a tax but rather the last day to pay without interest. The deadline is deferred, not the tax. Eligible taxpayers ("eligible" will be defined later) are entitled to defer their payment deadline until 3 months from the tax due date, instead of the usual one month. For semiannual and annual towns: the next installment comes due on July 1, 2020. This plan covers installments that come due up through and including July 1, 2020. For the July 1, 2020 installment, instead of the last day to pay being August 3, 2020 (August 1 falls on a Saturday), the last day to pay will instead be October 1, 2020 (three months from July 1) because the last day to pay is being deferred, or the grace period is being extended.

#### Section c: Eligibility of Landlords

The EO states that in order to be eligible for the extended grace period/deferral program, a "landlord," or any taxpayer that rents or leases to tenants or lessees, must provide

# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## (Continued)

“documentation” to the municipality that the property being taxed has, or will, suffer a significant income decline, or that commensurate forbearance was offered to the tenants or lessees.

On April 10, 2020, Executive Order 7X required all landlords to grant 60-day rent extensions to residential tenants for April (automatically) and May (by request due to loss of income). Landlords can satisfy the commensurate forbearance and income decline requirements for tax and other relief under EO 7S for residential properties simply by complying with EO 7X, and (for the deferment program) confirming they will do so in an e-mail to the tax collector.

Landlords of commercial properties may satisfy these requirements with the documentation listed in the application form provided by OPM.”

All email confirmations and applications have a strict deadline of July 1, 2020 (postmark accepted). For your convenience there is a fillable application on-line at [www.columbiact.org](http://www.columbiact.org) located on the Tax Collector’s page.

Please contact the Tax Collector with any questions at 860-228-0230 or email [taxcollector@columbiact.org](mailto:taxcollector@columbiact.org). Mailing address for applications: Town of Columbia, Tax Office, 323 RT 87 Columbia, CT 06237.

**TOWN CLERKS OFFICE:** Though the doors to Columbia Town Hall may be locked to the public, it is business as usual (whatever that may be?!) in the Town Clerk’s office. For those services that you might need – Fishing and Hunting licenses, Certified copies of Vital Records, Marriage Licenses, Transfer Station stickers, etc.

By maintaining social distancing and working staggered shifts, the Town Clerk’s office remains open. We are in uncharted waters right now, not knowing what each day will bring. Times like these have us thinking “outside the box” in order to continue serving the public. We’ve just had to get creative in the ways we can assist you!

WE ARE HERE! ASK A QUESTION! LET US HELP!

Give us a call (860)-228-3284 - send us an email (Robin – [townclerk@columbiact.org](mailto:townclerk@columbiact.org) ) or (Gail – [atownclerk@columbiact.org](mailto:atownclerk@columbiact.org) ) – we will do our best to help you.

Take care. Stay safe.

# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## (Continued)

**RECREATION DEPARTMENT:** All programs and events are canceled until further notice.

Follow us on [FaceBook](#) and [Instagram](#)!

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.**

Please note that the Parks and Recreation Department is now located at the Murphy House at Columbia Lake.

### **MARINE PATROL AND GATE MONITORING:**

#### **GATE MONITORING**

May 16th & 17th: 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

May 23rd - September 13th: 10:00 am – 8:00 pm

Weekends Only: September 19th - October 11th: 10:00 am-8:00 pm

#### **BOAT PATROL**

Dates: May 16th - September 13th

Weekends: 11:00 am - 8:00 pm

Weekdays: 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm

# NON-MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT NEWS AND INFORMATION

**SAXTON B. LITTLE LIBRARY:** The library building and book drop are closed. (No fines are accruing on items checked out.) We will keep you posted here, on Facebook and in the Newsletter as things change.

For something interesting and fun to do... Follow this [link](#)!

For information on COVID-19, Click [Here](#).

Click [here](#) to see Saxton's Work from Home adventures.

Digital Newsletters are being sent out on Fridays with updates about the Library and stuff to distract. Not signed up? Go to the [WEBSITE](#) and click subscribe.

Watch our Library's [Facebook](#) page (@saxtonblibrary), posting a few times a day. Megan is posting links to online story times, museum visits, web-cams, and more. Cait is updating new titles we're adding to our digital platforms. Even if you are not a member, our Facebook page is public so you can view it at any time!

If you have questions for us, just want to know we're here or want to chat! Write us.

We have a dedicated email for these times at [SBL@COLUMBIACLIVLIBRARY.ORG](mailto:SBL@COLUMBIACLIVLIBRARY.ORG).

**AHM YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES:** AHM Youth and Family Services has implemented a telehealth network for Columbia residents to have a place to call for services and resources. Staff members will be available from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. every weekday and are ready to offer support to residents who are experiencing anxiety about the Coronavirus pandemic. Call 860-228-9488 ext. 13 for general questions and concerns. Current Clients, or those who wish to obtain mental health services for youth can be directed to ext. 17.