

Town of Hamilton

Town Manager's Office

Town Manager Report to the Board of Selectmen

Mon. April 5, 2021

Legislature extends voting changes – Town Clerk Kale wants to let voters know that the Massachusetts state legislature has extended the temporary changes to state election laws, which were made to assist with voting during the pandemic, through June 30, 2021.

This means that voters can continue to vote by mail and participate in early voting prior to the May 6, 2021 Town Election. However, there are some deadlines. Voters must request a mail-in ballot using the application on the Town Clerk's webpage by Friday, April 30 at 5 p.m.

Also, the last day to register to vote in the Town Election is Friday, April 9. The Town Clerk's office will be open until 8 p.m. that day.



COVID cases rising again – On Thursday of this past week, our Public Health Nurse Rachel Lee informed the Board of Health and I that our case count for active COVID cases in Hamilton had risen again to 18 total cases with three families accounting for seven of the cases. This has put us back into the Yellow category on the state rating system.

Meanwhile, at the national level there have been reports in the past week that another surge has begun to take place, particularly in places and states where they have relaxed restrictions or removed mandatory face mask orders.

On behalf of the Board of Health and our Public Health staff, we'd like to remind all residents that the pandemic is not over – not yet.

There is a lot of good news and a lot of reason to be optimistic. Vaccinations are ramping up, children are going back to school fulltime and both the state and federal government have set mid-April as the period when most adults will be eligible to be vaccinated.

However, not everyone that is eligible is getting vaccinated and other people who are eligible are still waiting for appointments. Until the time comes that a clear majority of our residents have received the vaccine we will not achieve "herd immunity" and that means the danger of casual spread remains. It means that restrictions will remain in place and that people will continue to be asked to wear a mask in public and practice social distancing.



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With the annual spring vacation week starting April 19, we ask people to continue to follow the practices that have kept you and others safe for the past 13 months. Let's not take a step backwards when we are so close to ending this pandemic.

Shared Streets project – As the weather continues to improve, the Public Works Department will soon be overseeing improvements on Railroad Avenue, Willow Street and Asbury Street and at Patton Park, as the construction of the Shared Streets grant program improvements begins. The project will add street level electrical supply on Railroad Avenue, an improved bicycle and pedestrian route along Willow to Asbury Street, improved crosswalks and sidewalk ramps throughout the project area and bike parking racks at the corner of Railroad and Willow, as well as at Patton Park.



Details about the project will be shared on the town website and the work is being paid for with the MassDOT Winter Shared Streets grant funding that was awarded to the town in February.

Recreation Dept. registrations – In perhaps one of the clearest signs that our residents are ready for the pandemic to be over, the Hamilton-Wenham Regional Recreation Department opened registration for its summer programs last week and received 900 registrations in one day. It is by far the most successful first day of registrations ever.

Recreation Director Sean Timmons reports that there may still be capacity to add some additional programming this summer, but, at present, he has almost exhausted all available field and park spaces at his disposal. He has even partnered with the Patton Homestead to offer a once per week evening soccer program for the youngest age group out at the Homestead. Additionally, he is in the midst of hiring summer camp and pool workers to help manage these programs this coming summer.

Regional Vaccination effort – the Town of Hamilton this week has joined with the towns of Ipswich, Essex, Manchester by the Sea, Wenham and Rockport, the City of Gloucester and Conley's Pharmacy of Ipswich in seeking to have the Mass. Department of Public Health designate a Cape Ann Regional Vaccination site. This effort was led by Senator Bruce Tarr's office, which is bringing the request and application to DPH from the seven communities and Conley's.



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If approved, it may take a couple of weeks for the new sub-regional site to begin receiving vaccine, but we are hopeful that by mid-April we will once again be able to begin offering a closer vaccination site option for our residents, even if it is not always in Hamilton.

This effort was made due to the state's increasing reliance and deference to regional vaccinating sites and the inability of our local Boards of Health and Conley's to continue to receive an ample supply of vaccine, despite our successes working together to provide this option.

As soon as we know if our application for a regional site has been approved, we will begin notifying the public through our town website and social media accounts.

Clerk's office welcomes new staff – Town Clerk Carin Kale announced that the town has hired Anne Huguen as the new Administrative Assistant to the Town Clerk. Anne is a local resident and has been volunteering with the Clerk's office since last fall, when she first got hired as a temporary poll worker and Town Meeting worker.

Residents and staff are encouraged to stop by the Town Clerk's office when you are in Town Hall and welcome Anne.

Regional public health grant application – The Town of Hamilton this week joined with the towns of Wenham, Manchester by the Sea and Essex on a regional nursing and social services grant application that would, if awarded, provide much needed public health nursing support and social services resources to the four communities.

The application does not seek to replace any of our existing health services, but would provide additional resources that would be shared among the communities and develop a framework for working together across municipal jurisdictions on common, shared public health issues. If awarded, the grant will pay for the entire cost of the program for up to three years, during which the towns can seek additional state and federal grant dollars to support the program. The Boards of Health in both Hamilton and Wenham were supportive of the joint application, as were the operational managers in all four towns.

We are hopeful that the application will be positively received.



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