

TOWN OF UNION

MARCH 27TH, 2020

As I write this from my office the sun is rising over the horizon, the birds are chirping, and signs of spring surround us. However, every forecaster tells us the dark cloud is getting darker and we need to be prepared, not for weather but for an unprecedented virus.

OFFICE HOURS AND CLOSURES: Following the CDC guidelines, the Town Office will remain closed to all in person contact indefinitely, and we are asking all residents to maintain social distancing and staying home if possible. We may reduce hours people are in the office and eliminate it all together if we have an influx of cases in our area. In this scenario we will attempt to have someone taking calls during business hours.

Please remember, you do not need to register your vehicle until 30 days after the Governor ends the emergency, so there is no need to come to the office. We do recommend you register your vehicle online now as to avoid the long lines later. Re-registration can be done on rapid renewal, the link is on our website and if you need assistance our famous clerks can guide you through this over the phone.

Other registrations are also suspended but you can do most of those online also, including boats, ATV's etc.

SELECTBOARD MEETINGS: Town business will be conducted through e-mail, phone and snail mail only. Soon we will be announcing details on holding our Selectboard meetings online and how the public can listen in. We have limited hardware capability and staffing to allow citizens two-way conversations during these meetings. We will however follow the law and live stream the audio so citizens can stay informed.

Agendas will continue to be posted online, sent out on the list-serve and additional information will be included on each agenda item so the public can e-mail comments or questions to either the Town Manager or Selectboard.

TOWN MEETING: We will be waiting another week or two before deciding on the postponing of Town Meeting, please follow my Facebook page www.facebook.com/unionmaineusa for up to the minute updates.

ELECTIONS: June seems like it is far away but not really when you are dealing with elections. We are hopeful the Secretary of State is working on keeping everyone safe for the projected June elections. My opinion is that voting should be done by absentee ballot only, it is a lot of work internally but far safer for everyone.

SUMMER RESIDENTS/SNOWBIRDS: The CDC is recommending summer residents do not come into the state and stay isolated where they are. Now we all know that we have seen a plethora of out of state plates in our area and the only thing we can do is to ask them to quarantine themselves for 14 days. You as neighbors can assist with a little social pressure and maybe going to the store for them.

TAXES: We realize that many of you may have reduced hours or have even been laid off and may have difficulty paying your property taxes. I will be making a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen that

we delay interest on taxes for 30-60 days. **This has not yet been decided so please keep an eye out for more information.**

We are trusting that those who can pay will pay and not just wait. The Town, like everyone else needs the cash flow to continue running, and delaying payments only increases the expenses the following year. Don't get yourself into a hole that you can't get out of, call if you need assistance. We have a drop box outside the front door if you wish to drop a check off, or simply put it in the mail. Online payments are also available and details are on our website.

ASSISTANCE: If you need assistance of any kind, we urge you to first call 211, they will point you in the right direction. The Town of Union general assistance office is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursdays currently. All business will be done online, through the mail or internet, applications are available on the town website at www.union.maine.gov.

CRITICAL TIME IN MAINE:

The next few weeks are very critical for all of us in Union and the entire State of Maine. We are heading up the curve and we will see many more infections and possible deaths from this unprecedented disease.

We are a mobile society, it is hard to stay home, it is hard not to socialize in groups. However, do you want to be the one that spread the virus and caused a death?

Our children are restless, if you have a teenager at home like we do, it is extremely difficult to keep them grounded. They think they are invincible, just like we all did at that age, dang I still think I am! A ticked off teenager being bored at home is much better than one on a ventilator in ICU where you can't even go in and be with them.

ELDERLY: The Town of Union has a large elderly population and most of us are fiercely independent, me included. We need to protect our friends and neighbors and assist them in shopping, picking up medications, etc. They probably won't ask you, please ask them.

Practicing social distancing is the best way to protect everyone.

CONCLUSION: Every day, 7 days a week, I have been on at least one video conference regarding this issue, things not only change daily, they change hourly.

It is important that you stay informed and the best way is to subscribe to our list-serve and Facebook page www.facebook.com/unionmaineusa Some of our neighbors do not have electronics, so it is our civic duty to keep them notified also. Maybe print out the newsletter and drop off a copy.

If we need to take other precautions in Union, the quickest way to hear about them is electronically.

PLEASE TAKE THIS DISEASE SERIOUSLY, IT REALLY IS A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH.

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