

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Twelfth & 3/4th ¹ Update
Monday, March 23, 2020

Dear Guilderland residents:

In its daily update today, the Albany County Department of Health reported that there are now 122 confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 in the County, with 490 people under mandatory quarantine and 634 people under precautionary quarantine. While today's number of new cases only modestly increased from yesterday's 115 cases, County Executive McCoy noted that this news does not mean that the spread of the virus here is slowing. He stated that the number of administered tests dropped significantly because the local supply of kits was nearly gone.

The NYS Department of Health is reminding residents that if you received EMS services and were not transported or sought medical attention and were sent home that, if your symptoms worsen, you should contact your health care provider and if it is an emergency, call 911. At your first contact with a medic, EMT, ambulance driver, nurse, physician or other health care provider, you should immediately inform each such person if you have a cough or fever so that they can promptly and appropriately treat you. It is imperative that we keep our first responders safe and healthy as they are our community's first and primary defense against the spread of this virus.

I would like to share good news on how the Town's EMS Department is rapidly adapting its systems to handle this evolving health care emergency. It just acquired an ozone generator which disinfects the inside of the Town's ambulances and allows paramedics and EMT to perform other important duties, and more quickly to return the ambulances to service. The other good news is that there has been no appreciable change in 911 calls or requests for emergency services for the past week. I would also like to thank Multi-Phase Contracting Corp., a woman-owned business in Altamont, for its generous donation of masks and glasses to the EMS Department.

I can also report that the East Old State Road Bridge over the Thruway did actually close earlier this morning and will remain closed for about seven months. There were no reported issues.

I am pleased to report that Town's parks and trails had heavy activity this weekend, and that visitors were practicing "social distancing" and following health guidelines. I thank Parks' employees for making these facilities ready for your enjoyment so early in the season. And, if we should receive measurable snow (fingers-crossed here for yes), these trails are also suitable for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

Please check out the Guilderland Public Library's website (<https://guilderlandlibrary.org/>) for options to spend quality time at home. While the physical building is closed until at least April 1st, your Library remains open online 24 hours each day with an e-library portal for access to movies, TV shows, e-books, audiobooks, magazines and more.

¹ I'm not superstitious but there's no harm in creatively numbering these email updates. You'll have to read Harry Potter to appreciate at least one of the meanings of "3/4."

Since his Declaration of State of Emergency on March 7th, the Governor has issued nine more Executive Orders (www.governor.ny.gov/executiveorders), all of which are printed in 8^{1/2} x 14 legal size paper, single spaced, and a font size (maybe 11 or less) that often requires a magnifying glass. The Orders contain about 121 directives, all for the stated purpose of responding to this “disaster emergency.”

These directives, mostly only a few sentences in length, are necessary to manage this crisis, such as expediting the purchase of emergency supplies (3 lines), suspending regulations to allow more prompt treatments (4 lines), and other equally succinct emergency directives.

But one of the 121 directives stood out alone in its number of lines. It is not the directive to expand the capacity of hospitals (that took a scant 5 lines). And, no again, it is not the directive to increase temporary testing site (3 lines). No, at 16 lines, the winner is the directive in Executive Order 202.7 which allows notaries to use “audio-visual technology.”

Now maybe it’s just me and I admit that I’m getting a wee bit stir crazy, but after reading this directive, I’m not sure how a notary would even use it. I apologize if I have offended anyone (full disclosure: as a lawyer, I am also a notary) and I understand the legal importance of notarized documents. There’s also no need for you to call, email or try to explain it to me. When this crisis is in our collective rear window, there will be plenty of time for learned study and self-correction. I’m just struck that amongst all of the important directives to respond to this “disaster emergency,” it takes the most words to enlist notaries in this fight.

Thank you again for staying calm.

Sincerely,

Peter G. Barber
Town Supervisor