



Governor Ned Lamont

Frequently Asked Questions
on the State of Connecticut's actions
related to COVID-19

Updated 2:00 p.m. on May 30, 2020

DOG LICENSES

Question: My annual dog license runs out at the end of June, will I incur a late fee for not renewing it?

Answer: No, on May 5, 2020, Governor Lamont issued Executive Order 7II. This provides dog owners with a grace period through July 31, 2020 before a late fee is imposed for dog licenses, which are normally issued in June of each year.

MUNICIPAL PROCEDURES AND DEADLINES

Executive Order 7I issued on March 21, 2020 by Governor Lamont has significant effects on the operations of municipalities in Connecticut, particularly in the areas of budget adoption, land use applications and taxation and assessments. On March 24, 2020, Governor Lamont issued Executive Order 7L, which affects vital records such as birth, death, and marriage registration. On April 1, 2020, Governor Lamont issued Executive Order 7S, which affects municipal tax deadlines and collection efforts, as well as in-person votes to approve certain large expenditures. While the changes are discussed in some detail in the text of Executive Orders 7I, 7L, and 7S, the following are some of the highlights. More comprehensive analysis will follow in the coming days.

Vital Records

- Couples planning to marry may obtain their marriage license from any available registrar of vital statistics from any town in Connecticut if the registrar in the town they are marrying in is closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The 65-day period of validity for marriage licenses is extended for an additional 60 days for any marriage license that is obtained or what will expire during the declared public health emergency.
- In-person purchases of or access to copies of vital records at the Department of Public Health is suspended. The purchase of copies of vital records from DPH are limited to mail or on-line requests.
- The Department of Public Health is authorized to conduct birth, death, and marriage registration to assist local registrars of vital statistics.

Budget Adoption

- Executive Order 7HH clarifies that as of the date of issuance (May 1st) and going forward, the relevant elected body or bodies in each municipality **must** adopt a budget for 2020-2021 without an in-person vote by residents. It also validates any budget referendum or annual town meeting that has already been conducted. This order clarifies Executive Order No. 7I, Section 13, to provide uniformity and consistency across municipalities, and prioritize health and safety while the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in large gatherings remains high. In cases where the final action in the budget making process is a referendum or town meeting involving in-person votes of the public, the legislative body of the town – or the Board of Selectmen if 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. For guidance on identifying a town’s “budget making authority,” please refer to (1) your local charter; (2) Title 7; or (3) local ordinances in communities without charters. The “budget-making authority” must make reasonable efforts to reach out to the public, including providing draft budgets, and receive comments. Remote public budget meetings and hearings (by conference call, videoconference or other technology) shall proceed consistent with town charters or other applicable municipal ordinances, resolutions and procedures, and in compliance with the open meeting provisions in Section 1 of Executive Order No. 7B.

- Section 13 of Executive Order 71 applies to the suspension of “in-person” budget adoption requirements necessitating participation by members of the public, e.g., residents or property owners, in annual town meetings, referenda, special town meetings; and, thus, does not apply to a Representative Town Meeting (“RTM”), which by statute is an entity defined separately from a town meeting. RTMs should continue to conduct meetings by “conference call, videoconference or other technology” consistent with the requirements of Executive Order No. 7B.
- Executive Order No. 7C also extended all deadlines for budget adoption that fall on or before May 15. The intent of that order was to give towns flexibility and allow them to meet, extend, or adjust all the preliminary deadlines that lead to a budget adoption vote or meeting. That order, and its deadline extensions, are still in effect, so towns have some flexibility in deciding whether to act or whether to wait at least some time on their budget adoption process until the situation improves. Meanwhile, any budget action that requires an in-person vote of residents or taxpayers is replaced by the provisions of Executive Order No. 71. That order however, applies only to in-person votes of the public, whether at a referendum or town meeting (but not a Representative Town Meeting, which is body of elected representatives, not a town meeting) – it doesn’t relieve the relevant municipal legislative body from the obligations to vote, record its vote, and follow Freedom of Information laws as amended by Executive Order No. 7B. Towns should still use those provisions to hold any budget presentation meetings or other proceedings required by law.
 - Executive Order Nos. 7C and 71 do not alter or modify the control of line-items that fall squarely within the authority of Boards of Education within a single municipality. Boards of Education should also still comply with all requirements pertaining to budget deadlines adopted by the municipality in compliance with the open meeting provisions in Section 1 of Executive Order No. 7B.
 - Executive Order No. 75 allows municipal boards to approve certain emergency expenditures through bonding or other appropriations without the normally required in-person vote of taxpayers or referendum, but only if there is a written finding that the spending is for a time-critical emergency need to protect public health and safety or prevent significant financial loss to taxpayers.
- Executive Order No. 71, Section 14 establishes a parallel process for the adoption of budgets by regional boards of education. Regional boards of education shall consult with the budget making authority in each of its member towns and ensure it has received and given due consideration to

their input. It is recommended that where still possible, Regional Boards of Education present the proposed budget to the chief executive officer and the legislative body (or Board of Selectmen, if the legislative body is a town meeting) of each of the municipalities in the regional school district to get feedback prior to final passage.

Taxation and Assessment

- Section 15 extends deadlines and waives penalties for municipalities' failure to file certain information with the state within the statutory deadlines.
- Section 16 allows hearings of Boards of Assessment Appeals and certain abatement and exemption filings to be done electronically rather than in person.
- Municipalities may participate in the "Deferment Program" and offer to eligible taxpayers, businesses, nonprofits, and residents a deferment of three months of any taxes on real property, personal property, motor vehicles, and utility rates during the period of April 1, 2020 through and including July 1, 2020. To be eligible, a taxpayer must attest to or document significant economic impact by COVID-10.
- Municipalities may also participate in the "Low Interest Rate Program" and offer a three percent interest rate on any delinquent portion of the principal of any taxes on real property, personal property, motor vehicles, and utility rates for three months from the time it became due and payable until it is paid for any tax, rate, charge, or assessment due and payable from April 1 through and including July 1, 2020.
- Quasi-municipal corporations, such as local utility districts, must also offer the same program or programs that their municipality offers, if they are wholly within the municipality, or if they span multiple towns, choose one or both programs.
- Please see Executive Orders 7s and 7W for further details:
<https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/Pages/Emergency-Orders-issued-by-the-Governor-and-State-Agencies>.

Land Use Applications and Proceedings

Section 19 provides for the following:

- Land use applications and proceedings that are constrained by statutory deadlines will have those deadlines extended by up to an aggregate period of ninety (90) days in addition to any other statutory or regulatory extension provisions.
- Demolition delay timelines are extended by ninety (90) days

- Statutory or regulatory provisions requiring filings or publications of notices and other information are generally suspended to allow such filings or publications to be made on the municipality's website rather than in the town clerk's office or in a newspaper
- Statutory or regulatory provisions requiring posting of physical signs are suspended (with one exception noted below)
- Statutory or regulatory provisions requiring personal notice by mail to individuals, other boards or commissions, other towns, regional planning organizations or other entities or persons may be made by electronic mail where possible. If electronic mail addresses are unknown for any such recipients, the party obligated to give the notice may (i) post a sign on the property indicating that an application is pending and giving relevant details or (ii) mail required notices to those individuals or entities at the address provided to them by the municipality.
- Statutory or regulatory provisions requiring the filing of any petition, including a petition for an appeal to a legislative body or agency, may be satisfied by electronic filings of and electronic signatures on such petitions
- Commencement of an appeal of a municipal decision to Superior Court which requires service on the town clerk or other town official or entity may be satisfied by service by electronic mail by the proper officer. The time period for filing an appeal has not been changed.
- The appeal of a decision of a zoning enforcement officer or an inland wetlands agent may be made by electronic mail rather than regular mail. The time period for filing such appeals has not been changed.
- The suspensions and modifications contained in Section 19 of Executive Order 71 would require the filing or delivery of the applicable confirmations, notices, appeals or other actions to be made within a reasonable time after the applicable office opens for public activity.

Additional update as of April 15, 2020:

- **In-person attendance requirement suspended for assessment appeals:** Property owners or their attorney or agent are allowed to appear before a board of assessment appeals using remote technology instead of in person. For further information, please see <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Office-of-the-Governor/Executive-Orders/Lamont-Executive-Orders/Executive-Order-No-7Z.pdf?la=en>

Local Appointments and Elections

- Executive Order 700, Paragraph 1, issued on May 14, 2020 sets forth procedures and revised timelines for local appointments and elections requiring in-person votes. EO 700 extended the

deadlines for electing municipal and regional government, such that nominations shall be held on June 9, 2020 and elections shall be held between June 27 and June 30, 2020. These nominating and election town meetings shall to the greatest extent possible be conducted using remote means in accordance with the open meeting provisions of Executive Order No. 7B, while also implementing measures to safeguard the integrity of the process. One such measure to safeguard the integrity of the voting process may be the adoption of online or vote-by-mail ballot procedures by local officials. Such online or vote-by-mail option may be provided following a remote town meeting if it is determined to be the best method for validating the eligibility of electors.

Presidential Primary

- The Governor has postponed the primary election to August 11, 2020 under Executive Order 7BB, to protect the health and safety of voters, poll workers, and the most vulnerable members of our population. In addition, Executive Order 7QQ, enacted May 20, 2020, allows all registered voters in Connecticut to vote absentee in the August 11, 2020 primary elections.

CONDOMINIUM AND HOMEOWNER ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

Question:

My condominium/homeowners' association requires an in-person meeting – is there any alternative to this meeting at present?

Answer:

Executive Order 7HH Section 2 allows common interest communities, such as condominium associations and homeowners' associations, to conduct business remotely and hold votes entirely by ballot using existing statutory procedures for remote meetings and voting, even if their by-laws or governing documents do not already permit it.

DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES (DMV):

Question:

I need to go to the DMV, do I need to go in person?

Answer:

ALL DMV BRANCH OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC FOR THE TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE – DMV WILL PROVIDE SERVICES ONLINE, THROUGH THE MAIL, BY PHONE, AND DROP-OFF.