

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

A Legislative Pause

This is not the Legislative Bulletin we were planning to write, but few things look the way they did a short time ago. As probably everyone knows, all activity at the legislature has been suspended until at least April 10. This means, presumably, that the various deadlines for the House and Senate to act on bills are now meaningless, along with the June 4 date for finishing all legislative business.

We do not know what the new schedule and the new rules will be when—if—the legislature returns. We will provide that information when we have it. For now, legislative advocacy will necessarily take a back seat to more pressing matters, and we are not addressing any legislative issues in this Bulletin. If you do have some spare time, consider looking through recent editions of the Bulletin to remind yourself what the current legislative issues are, so you can be ready to discuss them again with your legislators if and when things return to something approaching normal.

The Pandemic's Effects on Town Budgets, Open Meetings, and Statutory Deadlines

Municipalities are facing a host of unprecedented issues as a result of the coronavirus emergency, and these go beyond the obvious public health issues and the matter of continuing basic governmental operations. We have been working with the governor's office and the attorney general's office to find solutions to the most pressing legal issues. We have added a [COVID-19 Resources page](#) to our website, which includes guidance on some of these matters. (From our home page, www.nhmunicipal.org, go to Resources & Publications, then COVID-19 Resources.)

Our legal staff is receiving many calls and e-mails with questions on these matters. We are happy to answer questions, but we encourage you to check the web page first; you may find answers there. We will update the page as we receive new information.

Town budgets. Many towns postponed their March annual meetings, and some others have meetings scheduled for April or May. So long as the prohibition on large gatherings remains in force, it may be impossible for

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towns to adopt their annual budgets. We are seeking assistance from the state to provide an alternative means for towns to adopt budgets in the event the continuing emergency makes it impossible to hold town meetings. Please also see [our memo addressing this issue](#).

Public meetings and hearings. Governing bodies, land use boards, and some other boards and committees will continue to need to meet at least occasionally. Our COVID-19 Resources page explains how members of public bodies may participate in meetings remotely without violating the Right-to-Know Law. At least for now, compliance with the law still requires that there be a physical location where the public has access and can listen to the meeting, even if it is only a room with a speaker phone in it. We hope to be able to get some relief from the physical location requirement, and we will update our guidance if that happens. Please also see [our memo addressing this issue](#).

Statutory deadlines. Planning and zoning boards will have problems meeting their statutory deadlines for making decisions if they are prohibited from holding meetings and hearings, or if public concerns make it implausible to do so. Again, we are hopeful that we can get some relief from these deadlines, and we will provide further information as soon as we have it.

NHMA Moves To Virtual Workshops

Due to the current COVID-19 situation, NHMA is moving from “in-person” workshops to “virtual” workshops for the time being. A **Virtual Workshop** is delivered via the internet, and presentations are communicated using a digital platform and tools. When you attend a virtual workshop, you will be able to hear the presenter LIVE, ask questions, see the PowerPoint—all from the comfort of your own home or office computer. We hope you will join us for these upcoming Virtual Workshops.

The first Virtual Workshop offered will be **The Right-to-Know Law and Governmental Meetings Virtual Workshop** originally scheduled for Derry on March 31st. This **Right-to-Know Virtual Workshop** will be held on the same day and time, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 31st. The cost remains the same—\$40.00.

If you previously signed up for the workshop in Derry and do not wish to participate in the Virtual Workshop, please contact Ashley Methot at amethot@nhmunicipal.org, and a full refund will be made available to you. If you wish to join us, after registering for the Virtual Workshop you will receive an email from **NHMA Webinars** confirming your registration, including a **JOIN WEBINAR** link. NHMA uses **GoToWebinar** as our digital platform for producing these training and educational resources for our municipal members. Simply click the link to join the training event at the specified time and date.

NHMA’s Legislative Policy Process

Understanding that our members’ focus has shifted due to COVID-19, we will be postponing, but not cancelling, our Legislative Policy Process, originally scheduled to begin with an organizational meeting on April 3. We will be in contact with you soon to update you on the new timeline and provide alternative means of virtual meetings as necessary.

NHMA's Ongoing Services

NHMA is strongly committed to providing our members a continuation of our education and training services during these challenging times. NHMA is fully functional and continues to support our members by using electronic communication and by using teleconferencing tools to facilitate upcoming training events, such as these Virtual Workshops. We hope you will join us! More importantly, we wish you, and your residents, good health!

2020 NHMA UPCOMING MEMBER EVENTS	
Mar. 31	<i>Virtual Workshop:</i> Right-to-Know Law & Governmental Meetings (6-8 p.m. online)
Apr. 1	<i>Webinar:</i> Legislative Half-time (12:00 – 1:00 p.m. online)
Apr. 7	<i>Virtual Workshop:</i> Local Officials (online)
Please visit www.nhmunicipal.org for the most up-to-date information regarding our upcoming training opportunities and events.	
For more information, please call NHMA's Workshop registration line: (603) 230-3350.	