

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

The Wait Gets Longer

We noted last week that all legislative activity had been suspended until at least April 10. Not surprisingly, that suspension has now been continued to May 4. It is also clear now that all legislative deadlines, including the June 4 deadline for ending the legislative session, will need to be extended.

Some consideration is being given to enabling committees to have “virtual” meetings. In this week’s House calendar, the Speaker states that “we are exploring ways for us to be able to meet remotely, at least with our committees, so we can get work done.” One of the obvious challenges will be the need to have any such meetings open to the public. It appears these efforts are still in the exploratory stage, and no committee activity, virtual or otherwise, is scheduled for the next week.

Stay-at-Home Order Exempts Municipal Government

No doubt everyone is aware that the governor issued [Emergency Order #17](#) yesterday, ordering New Hampshire residents to stay at home and ordering all businesses and other organizations that do not provide essential services to close their physical facilities, effective tonight at 11:59 p.m., and continuing through May 4. The order includes [a list](#) of businesses and organizations deemed to provide essential services.

Notably, paragraph 6 of the emergency order states that the order does not apply to local governments or local legislative bodies, so municipal governments may continue to operate as they have; the stay-at-home order does not impose any new restrictions. Of course, we urge local officials to continue taking all appropriate precautions, and remember that [Emergency Order #16](#), prohibiting scheduled gatherings of 10 persons or more, remains in effect. That order does apply to local governments.

NHMA Legislative Bulletin 14
March 27, 2020

Inside this issue:

COVID-19 Legal Issues	2
Track Your Expenses	2
Federal Funding	2
Assistance for Non-Profits	3
NHMA Events	3

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS CONTACT INFORMATION

Margaret M.L. Byrnes,
Executive Director

Cordell A. Johnston,
Government Affairs Counsel

Barbara T. Reid,
Government Finance Advisor

Natch Greyes,
Municipal Services Counsel

Timothy W. Fortier,
Communications Coordinator



25 Triangle Park Drive
Concord NH 03301
Tel: 603.224.7447
EM: governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org
Website: www.nhmunicipal.org

COVID-19 Legal Issues

Questions continue to pour in to NHMA's legal staff about how to handle postponed town meetings, electronic land use board meetings, and all kinds of other situations presented by the new stay-at-home reality. Please continue to visit the [COVID-19 Resources page](#) on our website, which includes guidance on these matters and links to useful state and federal resources. (From our home page, www.nhmunipal.org, go to Resources & Publications, then COVID-19 Resources.)

As mentioned in [last week's Bulletin](#), we have asked the governor's office and the attorney general's office, in a [March 20 memorandum](#), for relief from various statutory deadlines and other requirements that never contemplated this kind of emergency. The governor addressed some of those issues in [Emergency Order #12](#), allowing greater flexibility for public bodies to hold remote meetings under the Right-to-Know Law. We do not have answers on our other requests yet, but we hope to soon, and we will post updates as soon as we have anything to report. If you cannot find answers on the COVID-19 Resources page, do not hesitate to call or e-mail us with your questions. NHMA is fully operational and working remotely.

Track Your COVID-19 Related Expenses

We know municipalities are experiencing, and will continue to experience, unanticipated costs associated with COVID-19, such as costs for federally mandated sick leave, additional personal protective equipment for first responders, and increased demands for public assistance. All municipalities are urged to keep close track of these and other costs being incurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As explained below, significant amounts of funding in various pieces of federal legislation and numerous federal programs are beginning to materialize, with additional funding legislation expected. **All municipalities are urged to keep close track of costs being incurred due to the COVID-19 crisis.**

Additionally, NHMA and our partner organizations need to understand the kinds of costs (other than those mentioned above) that municipalities are incurring as a result of the pandemic. There are three ways to help provide this information:

1. [Complete this survey](#) to help the Community Development Finance Authority, the UNH Extension, and their partner organizations understand better how to address community issues and needs.
2. During the coming weeks, email NHMA at governmentaffairs@nhmunipal.org to let us know the types of COVID-19 related expenses you are incurring so that we may better lobby state and federal officials and work with our partners to obtain reimbursement for cities and towns.
3. Homeland Security and Emergency Management will be sending communities information that will be needed to assist in reimbursing for COVID-19 expense in the coming months. If a municipality has any questions about this, please contact the local liaison line at 223-3663.

Federal Emergency Funding

NHMA continues to monitor the actions Congress is taking to address the pandemic and the advocacy efforts of the National League of Cities, with a focus on funding for local governments. The most recent information we have at the time of publishing today's *Bulletin* is a summary from the National League of Cities (NLC) regarding funding in the Senate-passed version of the CARES Act (H.R. 748), a \$2 trillion

emergency package intended to stave off total economic collapse in the wake of the coronavirus. The House is expected to vote on the bill sometime today. The NLC summary is available [here](#) and on [NHMA's COVID-19 Resources Page](#) on our website. If you are interested in more detail, see this [section-by-section summary](#) of the bill.

One of the more significant provisions of the bill is the \$139 billion for the State and Local Coronavirus Relief Fund. No money from that fund will come directly to any New Hampshire city or town, since the criterion for direct funding to a municipality is a population that exceeds 500,000. However, the state will receive a minimum of **\$1.25 billion** to be used for “necessary expenditures” related to COVID-19 incurred during the period March 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. While there is no provision for the state to distribute money to local governments, we will certainly be advocating that state officials allocate part of this funding to reimburse municipalities for COVID-19 expenses, which is why tracking your expenses is so crucial.

As you will see from the NLC summary, there is a lot of money being provided through many different programs. We will keep you informed as we learn more about this legislation and the funding available to municipalities.

Assistance for Non-Profits

On Wednesday the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation announced that it will begin granting at least \$3 million over the next few weeks to nonprofit organizations working to address the unprecedented needs of New Hampshire citizens due to COVID-19. As many municipalities rely on the services nonprofits provide in their communities, we encourage you to share this information with those organizations to help them continue meeting the needs of the people they serve. The Foundation is adapting its grantmaking requirements to provide maximum flexibility for grantees, prioritize support for the most vulnerable, and mobilize new resources. For more information, visit the [Foundation's COVID-19 webpage](#).

2020 NHMA UPCOMING MEMBER EVENTS	
Mar. 31	Virtual Workshop: Right-to-Know Law & Governmental Meetings (6-8 p.m. online)
Apr. 1	Webinar: Legislative Half-time -- POSTPONED
Apr. 7	Virtual Workshop: Local Officials (online)
Apr. 8	Webinar: ZBA Basics in New Hampshire (12:00 – 1:00 p.m. 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.	