



For Immediate Release

March 13, 2020

Town of Darien – COVID-19 Local Update

Today marks an important day in the Town of Darien's ongoing efforts to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Local health officials received information that Darien has our first official test-positive case. Darien's Emergency Preparedness team and Town Staff have been anticipating this moment and we are ready to address the wide variety of community impacts. Our number one priority is to keep our residents safe and businesses and non-profit organizations in operation unless and until it becomes necessary to impose limitations due to public health risks.

On January 31, the United States Health and Human Services Secretary declared a National Public Health Emergency and today, President Trump declared the COVID-19 pandemic a National Emergency. As of March 31, there are 1629 test-positive cases and 41 deaths from the virus. It is widely assumed the number of cases is significantly under-reported given the lack of testing availability and mild symptoms in many people. Southwest Connecticut and Rockland County, New York are areas of concern for significant, on-going community (non-travel related) transmission.

In response to Governor Lamont's Public Health Emergency Declaration on March 10, I opened Darien's Emergency Operations Center in virtual status. Local officials participate in daily COVID-19 situation update calls with the Governor, CT Department of Public Health, Region 1 Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security and the White House. I am collaborating with my Chief Elected colleagues in Southwest Connecticut to share information and synchronize mitigation policies when possible. My office is in daily contact with community organizations to provide guidance on operations and logistics planning.

Proactive mitigation actions taken by Darien Town Government this week included the following:

- Darien Public Schools are closed until March 26
- Darien Town Hall will be operating on a Limited Access/By Appointment basis beginning on Monday, March 16.
 - Utilize online and by-mail municipal services, applications and forms, if available.
 - Call Town Hall, by department, to make an appointment, if needed.
 - Access to Town Hall will be through the Gymnasium entrance with patron screening in Room 119.
 - All patrons will be required to sign in and use hand sanitizer before proceeding to town departments.
 - As of Monday, March 16, and until further notice, all non-essential town-sponsored and community organization programs scheduled for the Town Hall facility will be canceled. Parks & Recreation programming will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- Darien Senior Program will be closed from March 16 until further notice.

- Darien Recycling Center Swap Shop is closed until further notice.

In an effort to keep our residents safe, community organizations and churches are modifying and/or canceling programs and services. Please contact organizations directly for up to date schedule change information.

On a personal note, I'm deeply grateful to our town residents, businesses and municipal staff for understanding the unique and serious nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will take our Darien Village to support one another through these stressful times. It's tempting to treat time away from school and work-from-home time as an opportunity to get together with friends but a safe community requires the diligence of each and every one of us to look out for each other. Social distancing is becoming even more critical as the virus spreads among us. Even though 80% of COVID-19 cases result in mild symptoms, we cannot risk spreading the infection unknowingly to our friends and loved ones as it could have devastating consequences for the elderly and medically compromised.

With spring-like weather coming, I encourage everyone to enjoy the outdoors!

For comprehensive world, national and statewide information on COVID-19, please visit www.CDC.gov, www.who.int and www.ct.gov/coronavirus websites. Visit the Town of Darien website at www.darienct.gov for local updates.

Jayne J. Stevenson
First Selectman