

Given the concerns of holding the business session of Plainfield's Town Meeting this Saturday due to the coronavirus, I have conferred with a number of state and local officials and determined the best option is to proceed with the meeting as scheduled. Let me explain why and what we plan to do to mitigate, to the extent possible, the concerns.

### **Basis for Postponement**

First, RSA 40:II-a provides for the moderator to postpone town meeting if it is determined the meeting location is unsafe due to "accident, natural disaster, or other emergency" and confer with local officials and appropriate health/safety officials in determining so. The statute also requires that, if postponement occurs, the meeting's future date and place be identified.

I have spoken twice with the NH Attorney General representative at the Sec. of State's office. He noted the Governor has determined from his March 11 conference call with various health officials that there is not a state of emergency in NH at this time due to the coronavirus. The individuals that have tested positive in NH have been from individual traceable contact and not a community spread. I also reviewed the NH Dept. of Health and Human Services Department's website and the federal health officials (CDC and others) recommendations for guidance. I then conferred as required with the town clerk and select board. We agree that the risk now is low and does not render the "meeting location unsafe". Also, if we were to postpone the meeting, identifying a "safer" future date is difficult, especially as most health experts predict the situation will likely be worse for a period of time before hopefully getting better.

### **Mitigation of Concerns**

Recognizing that some folks, especially those who have underlying health issues, may be hesitant to attend, you should be aware of several things at Town Meeting that will be different:

- 1) The statutes do not provide for absentee or written ballot voting at the business session portion of the town meeting. However, for Article 2, the library article, I will keep the ballot box open for an hour after discussion concludes. While not required, it will allow for voters who do not want to congregate during the discussion but wish to vote, to have family or friends call them at home and be able to come, register, vote and return home.
- 2) All the chairs, tables, etc. will be cleaned and sanitized the evening before the meeting and hand cleaner will be available during the meeting. Voting and microphone use will be done in such a way as to eliminate any contact.
- 3) The regular school entrance will be locked, nor will there be any 8<sup>th</sup> grade food buffet, babysitting or other displays in that area. You will enter the side gym door as you did for voting on Tuesday. Hopefully the 8<sup>th</sup> grade will have some donation "help your self" food in the gym, but you may want to bring your own drink and food.
- 4) To minimize the time we are assembled, I will try to stream-line where we can without inhibiting discussion.

Last, this is a meeting amongst neighbors. Please try to do your part in making this meeting happen as safely as possible, balancing your important right to participate and vote with caring for each other's health.

Paul Franklin, Town Moderator