

# A Message from First Selectman Bindelglass Updated 4/30/2021

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Good afternoon,

We had our best two week COVID period in a long time. For the two weeks ending April 24th, the per 100,000 rate is 10.5. While that is good news, we are still seeing cases cropping up in our schools. As we approach the end of the school year, we hope to make it the rest of the way with no closures. At the next Board of Selectmen meeting we will be discussing further opening of town buildings to the public and holding open meetings for Boards, Commissions, and Committees. All normal Town Hall functions will continue to be available. Please call ahead to make appointments and arrangements. Residents can walk in during normal business hours to make tax payments only (masks required). We want to avoid people wandering into the building without appointments. This is for your safety as well as our employees.

On April 26, 2021, we held the Annual Town Meeting. There were some technical issues and I apologize for those. We continue to work on improving transmission. The budgets for the Town, Board of Education, and Region 9 (Joel Barlow High School) were

presented and discussed. The five-year capital plan, Grand List and two bridge appropriations were passed without further discussion. The Resolution on Racism and Public Health was also discussed. The resolution and the budgets will be voted on in a referendum this Tuesday, May 4, 2021, 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Samuel Staples Elementary School.

The discussion was spirited, particularly concerning the resolution. While some residents were upset about the 3-minute limit per turn at the microphone, there was no limit on the number of times an individual could speak and no discussion was terminated until all were given the chance to speak as often as they wanted. The Annual Town Report was made available, fulfilling our statutory obligation to provide the information which can be found in the report. Additional copies can be picked up at Town Hall (on the table in the Police Department Lobby). As First Selectman, I believe that I can make some improvements in the overall process. There are some procedural issues concerning when to make motions and which motions need votes which fall beyond the scope of Robert's Rules or the statutes governing town meetings. Prior to the next town meeting, I will be sure to have all of those procedural matters spelled out beforehand as well as rules for speakers, so there will be no confusion.

There was also discussion about whether the budget can be reduced at the Annual Town Meeting. My predecessor, Adam Dunsby, obtained an opinion from counsel (Berchem Moses) that the budget cannot be reduced. We are currently governed by and will proceed under the findings in that opinion. As was pointed out at the meeting, there is currently a legal challenge to that opinion. We will wait to hear the results of that challenge and act accordingly.

Regarding the recent drawing of a swastika on the ground at one of our schools, I personally believe the best way to handle this situation is by education and not by punishment. I have complete faith in our educators to do so. This symbol of hatred has no place in our community. Nonetheless, incidents like this should lead to reflection. I expect that the next few days leading up to the referendum will see a continuation of the

spirited debate on the race resolution discussed at the Annual Town Meeting. The most cogent arguments I have been aware of are those that avoid being personal in nature. Your opinion may differ from your neighbor; it makes neither your opinion nor your neighbors the “correct” one. These are difficult issues that many districts in our region and our nation are facing. I have faith in the people of our town to listen to each other and to discuss matters with civility, setting the best possible example for our children.

The South Park Avenue Bridge work should be starting soon. Please watch for the announcement of the road closure. Please also be mindful of your speed as you navigate the detour. These are residential areas; speeding and other reckless activity will not be tolerated.

Learn about the budget and resolution and vote on Tuesday. Have a great weekend!

**Dave Bindelglass**