

Message from First Selectman Bindelglass, Update for Aug. 1 Weekend



First Selectman David Bindelglass released the following statement about the state's pandemic response, July tax collections, police accountability legislation, the Westport Weston Health District, and school reopening guide lines:

I hope everyone is enjoying their summer. Fortunately, we continue to do well as a state, all the more so, because as you know most states are not fairing nearly as well.

Currently, there are 36 states that are high risk. Staying in the northeast is probably the safest way for you and our community to stay disease free. For that reason the Governor has issued executive orders requiring 14 days of quarantine for travel to one of these high risk states. Although the method has not been made clear, there will potentially be fines of up to \$1000 for violations. Many companies will not allow workers to claim sick time or be paid for the quarantine time as travelling for vacation to one of these states is a choice. More action from the state may be forthcoming.

July is tax collection month and the Town appears to be doing well on two fronts. First the process for paying including our new online payment method and the controlled access to town hall to pay in person are going well. Second, despite the economic issues our country is facing, we are seeing very good rates of collection in Easton. Thank you

on both counts.

Many of you may know that both houses of the Connecticut legislature have passed police accountability legislation. I want to let you know that I meet regularly with Chief Doyle to review our policies and procedures. There will be a process for implementing the new regulations arising from this bill once it is law. This is the highest of priorities for the police department and for the town. I greatly appreciate the Chief's efforts.

The Westport Weston health district has hired a new sanitarian that will be responsible for Easton. He will be located in our Easton office two days a week with similar hours to our current sanitarian, Polly Edwards. We will delay our association with the health district for several weeks until he is fully on board. Again, Polly and Dr. Chris Michos have agreed to hold on for a few more weeks to see this transition through, and we thank them, yet again, for their service.

In regards to schools, on Thursday the state issued new guidelines for not only opening schools but for indications to transition from full classes to hybrid to distant learning based on metrics for the virus, i.e. rates of hospitalizations, test positivity and case growth. Even as we get closer and closer to a potential opening day, there are so many questions. I can only urge patience. Our central office staff and Boards of Education are working feverishly to plan in an ever changing landscape. I view major league baseball as a cautionary tale. It took one whole weekend to affect everything that had been planned for weeks. Hopefully, we will do better, but there will be more information that continues to come out.

Have a great weekend. Be safe and be careful. For are young adults especially, keep up the good work. You are a tribute to our community and have played a great part in keeping us all safe.

Dave Bindelglass

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Op-Ed: Legislature Must Give Special Session Measures Due Consideration



On July 23, the Connecticut House of Representatives was in session to discuss changes to Connecticut's absentee voter laws, police accountability reform, and important healthcare changes as the industries adjust to added challenges treating patients during Covid-19. The Senate is expected to take up those bills today, July 28.

In these unprecedented times, the legislature is using unprecedented methods to affect some major changes to Connecticut law. We cannot let the pandemic or the emotionally charged atmosphere force us to rush through these expansive and consequential bills. These are important matters that require careful consideration, public input and proper process.

On the issue of police accountability reform, I do support taking a closer look at the accountability and transparency of Connecticut's police force. As the ranking senator on the Public Safety Committee I have been very invested and led the recent measures proposed to strengthen police oversight and social justice. I would recommend the legislature fully examine any unintended consequences to law enforcement working to

maintain public safety and to municipal financial and legal liabilities that would occur if law enforcement lost its qualified immunity.

The short two-day notice we received for the virtual “public hearing” has me concerned that the legislative body is taking a rushed approach to handling a very important and emotionally charged issue affecting many people in and out of law enforcement.

I have received an incredible amount of input and suggestions from my constituents and law enforcement on how and if the legislature should enact any police accountability reforms. I appreciate each person taking the time to share their thoughts on the proposed changes to an integral part of our everyday lives.

On the issue of Connecticut absentee voter laws, the rules surrounding a voter’s ability to vote absentee needs our immediate attention. I support expanding the regulations to include people voting absentee so as not to put themselves at risk of contracting Covid-19, or any illness for that matter, due to their compromised immune systems.

We must approve whatever measures necessary to legitimize the changes enacted by the Connecticut Secretary of the State for the 2020 primary and general elections. I would urge my colleagues to not let the perfect be the enemy of the good and make sure we are putting voter’s health and safety first in the immediate future.

Looking ahead, any constitutional change must go through the proper, legal process to make permanent changes to the Connecticut constitution to enable these expanded absentee rules in the long term.

On the issue of health care cost concerns, two items to be addressed in the July Special Sessions are capping the price of insulin and expanding insurance providers’ requirement to provide coverage for services provided via telehealth.

The rest of health care needs to continue functioning even with all the added stress of

the pandemic. This is not the time to play games with profit margins or covered services. I am glad to see that the legislature is taking a closer look at mitigating the additional financial burdens Connecticut residents are taking on to manage their health.

Hwang represents the 28th Senate District in the Connecticut General Assembly. Hwang is deputy minority Senate Leader and the ranking legislative leader on the Public Safety and Security Committee and Higher Education & Employment Committees and also serves as a member of the Transportation Committee.