



TOWN OF SOUTH KINGSTOWN

PRESS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

BUDGET REFERENDUM POSTPONED TO JULY 14TH, 2020 IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

MAY 27, 2020: The Town of South Kingstown is monitoring the ongoing COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, is following State and Federal guidance to help promote the health and safety of our community, and is implementing precautionary measures to reduce opportunities for COVID-19 transmission in South Kingstown.

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the State of Emergency declared by the Governor March 9th, 2020, and the Declaration of Emergency by the Town Council March 15th, 2020, the Town Manager has issued an Executive Order today regarding the Town of South Kingstown's Budget Referendum Date. The full Executive Order is attached to this Press Release for ease in reference. The Town is providing notice of the following:

The South Kingstown Board of Canvassers has recently verified the signatures on two budget referendum petitions, and due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, the Board of Canvassers has requested that the referendum be postponed in order to protect public health and encourage the use of emergency ballots.

The Town Manager has authorized the budget referendum to be postponed from Tuesday June 9th, 2020 to Tuesday July 14th, 2020, through Executive Order 2020-10. The delay is intended to allow the Town to conduct an election in the safest possible manner while also ensuring that as many qualified voters as possible may exercise their right to vote.

For more information on the upcoming Budget Referendum, please visit the Town Clerk's page on the Town's website www.southkingstownri.com/275/Town-Clerk. Information regarding the budget referendum will be posted shortly.

Guidance for Members of the Public: During this pandemic, all residents are strongly advised to minimize their risk through the use of social distancing. While the Governor has lifted the Stay at Home order, residents are encouraged to stay close to home, and should remain home if you are sick (with any symptoms). The Governor has ordered that cloth face coverings which cover the mouth and nose are to be worn when at work and when in public (indoor and outdoor), however be advised the wearing of cloth face masks does not eliminate or reduce the need to abide by social distancing requirements. Gatherings remain limited to no more than 5 people, and be advised that even when gathering in small numbers, social distancing guidance is to still maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from other people. Travelers to Rhode Island and some residents are required to self-quarantine for 14 days and per the Governor's Orders. Residents are strongly advised to stay up to date on the Federal, State, and local response to and guidance on, the evolving COVID-19 situation. Please visit the Town's COVID-19 webpage for up to date information and links to Federal, State, and local resources www.southkingstownri.com/998/COVID-19. Because of the evolving nature of this ongoing community health situation, the Town may implement additional mitigation measures with short notice, and the information provided here is subject to change. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding. For additional updates from the Town, as well as information and resources related to COVID-19, we encourage residents to visit www.southkingstownri.com. Updates and information will also be shared via the Town's official Facebook page, www.facebook.com/southkingstownri. Questions can be referred to the Town Manager's Office at (401) 789-9331 x1201.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR
EXECUTIVE ORDER 2020-10

Whereas, on March 9, 2020, Governor Gina Raimondo issued Executive Order 20-03, declaring a state of emergency for the State of Rhode Island, based upon the danger to health and life posed by the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19;

Whereas, on March 15, 2020, the South Kingstown Town Council declared the existence of an emergency based upon COVID-19, which was then superseded by emergency declarations dated April 13, 2020, and May 11, 2020;

Whereas, on May 6, 2020, Governor Raimondo issued Executive Order 20-31, extending the statewide state of emergency until June 5, 2020;

Whereas, Sec. 4222(E) of the South Kingstown Home Rule Charter provides that following final approval of the budget by the Town Council, any qualified elector of the Town may circulate a petition requesting that a referendum be held on the appropriation for the general fund or the school fund in the budget as approved;

Whereas, Sec. 4222(F) of the Charter provides that “the town clerk shall cause a referendum by ballot to be held on the Tuesday following the first Saturday in June on all budget changes requested on petitions submitted pursuant to subsection E hereof, provided that each such petition shall contain signatures of no less than two hundred of the qualified electors of the town and shall request an increase or decrease of a sum of at least \$250,000”;

Whereas, on May 18, 2020, the South Kingstown Board of Canvassers verified the signatures on two referendum petitions, one of which seeks to reduce the Town’s tax transfer to the School Fund by the amount of \$1.1 million, and another of which seeks to reduce the appropriation to the General fund by the amount of \$300,000;

Whereas, in the last referendum in 2009, approximately 4,408 voters cast their ballots, and

Whereas, as of May 26, 2020, the limit on gatherings is still set at 5, with the gathering limit expected to increase to 15 on June 1, and further expected to increase to 50 at some point thereafter;

Whereas, the South Kingstown Board of Canvassers (the “Board”) has requested that the referendum be postponed in order to protect public health and encourage the use of emergency ballots upon application;

Whereas, a substantial delay in the referendum may have negative fiscal impacts to the Town;

Whereas, on March 23, 2020, Governor Raimondo issued Executive Order 20-11, delaying the Presidential Preference Primary election and preparing for a predominantly mail ballot election, and on April 17, 2020, issued Executive Order 20-27, making further preparations for a predominantly mail ballot election;

Whereas, minimizing contact between individuals, including those who would ordinarily vote at a polling place, will reduce the potential for the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus;

Whereas, many medical and public health professionals warn that the easing of restrictions may lead an increase in the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus;

Whereas, as of May 24, 2020, the Rhode Island Department of Health reported that 14,065 cases of COVID-19 have been identified, including 90 positive cases from the Town of South Kingstown, with 608 total fatalities resulting, and 240 people hospitalized at present;

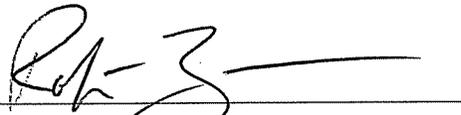
Whereas, pursuant to the emergency powers granted by the Rhode Island General Laws, and any other applicable provisions of state or local law, the Town Manager can issue additional directives, orders, and recommendations as circumstances require;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Robert C. Zarnetske, Town Manager, by virtue of the authority vested in my office pursuant to the Rhode Island General Laws, including but not limited to Title 30, Chapter 15 of the General Laws, and pursuant to the authority delegated to me by the Town Council, do hereby order and direct the following:

1. The referendum shall be postponed from Tuesday, June 9, 2020 to Tuesday, July 14, 2020. This delay is intended to allow the Town to conduct an election in the safest possible manner while also ensuring that as many qualified voters as possible may exercise their right to vote.
2. The Town Clerk and Board of Canvassers may take all reasonable and necessary steps to hold the referendum on July 14.
3. The Town Clerk and Board of Canvassers are directed to work in conjunction to determine a plan to make emergency ballots applications and ballots available, as provided for in Sec. 4222(G) of the Charter.
4. The Clerk and the Board shall continue to adhere to the guidance provided by the Rhode Island Department of Health and the Rhode Island Board of Elections.

Issued May 27, 2020

By



Robert Zarnetske, Town Manager

Attest:



Susan M. Flynn, Town Clerk

