



from your Associate Director

By Jerry B. Crabtree

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WHEN I STARTED TO THINK about topics to include in my article this month it had a completely different focus than what was predicted. Normally, I would be commenting on the success of our Educational District programs held in March. Simply not the case. All our educational district field events in March were cancelled the week of the 9th as we prepared for our new normal in Illinois local government.

Bryan, Pam and I have fielded hundreds of phone calls and emails on what is cancelled, what is not, how to handle our current requirements, bills, meetings etc. What a challenging two weeks we have been forced to overcome.

This is a time of many new FIRSTS for everyone. The important thing is that we remain safe and healthy and encourage the Governor's order of social distancing. Then, we focus on what we do to carry on the goals and objectives of township government within the imposed guidelines. It is possible that this new way of doing business may continue for several months when impacting meeting in public spaces. The Township Officials of Illinois will do our best to update you as soon as possible when new guidelines are issued.

I want to assure you that we are adapting plans every day and taking necessary steps to ensure the health and well-being of all township officials and their staff(s) while supporting you to continue to deliver within the goals and objectives of township government in your individual townships.

Governor Pritzker provided some guidance in the recent issuance of Executive order 2020-20 suspending the annual town meeting through the deadline of the recent executive order (currently through April 30, 2020). We will continue to work with the Governor's legal office or the Illinois General Assembly to finalize a date to hold the statutorily required meeting in the future. Updates on this and any new developments will be distributed to you via email (if we have an active email addressing our database) as well as posted to the TOI website and Facebook page.

One thing I have noticed is the unwavering support of technology during this time. Although devastating to your daily work normal – we have all been forced to embrace technology to continue our work and family

socializing. TOI held two zoom meetings the first week of the social distancing suggestion and we had over 150 people on each call for updates relative to township government.

The following is a list of some Frequently asked questions I have received relative to our new operational guidelines as together we work through this pandemic to keep everyone safe.

Q: I HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS BUT I DO NOT GIVE IT OUT!

A: The sensitivity of email address distribution is a common theme among our members. I understand that spam and unwanted email is a real issue. However, the communication link between our work as YOUR association and YOUR responsibilities related to township government change, at times, day to day. The fastest way for us to provide you with new information is by email. With over 10,000 members it is impossible to mail updates via regular postal mail. Our policy is strict. We simply do NOT give any email address out to third party vendors. We work very diligently for the safety of our members contact information.

If you are interested in providing us with our email address to receive updates, please contact the TOI office.

Q: SINCE THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING IS SUSPENDED WHEN WILL IT BE HELD?

A: As of the writing of this article, in compliance with the Executive order, the Annual Town Meeting has been suspended in compliance with a previous Executive Order currently through April 30, 2020. TOI is currently working with the Governor's office on direction to schedule the meeting in the future.

Q: WHERE ARE UPDATES PROVIDED FROM TOI?

A: All updates, as we receive them, are provided via email and posted to the TOI website at www.toi.org. Our member database has email addresses for each member that has provided an active email as part of their membership. If you have not been receiving emails from our office and would like to, please forward your email address to Pam Butler at Pam@toi.org.

Q: WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT BILLS IF MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS HAVE BEEN CANCELLED?

A: We suggested that you can meet by phone or even email approval of bills so that no bills go beyond a 30-day payment cycle regarding regularly scheduled board meetings. We recommended that you document in the minutes for any meeting procedures held this way in the monthly board minutes. The next time that you meet as a board in person with a quorum these minutes can be approved. Remember, the Governor lifted the requirement currently through April 30, 2020 on having electronic participation guidelines in place prior to utilizing them.

Q: CAN GENERAL ASSISTANCE FUNDS BE USED TO HELP THE COVID-19 CRISIS?

A: There is many discussions surrounding the use of General Assistance funds for assistance to those displaced or impacted by the COVID -19 pandemic. The official interpretation of the General Assistance Training Institute (GATI) is the following:

General Assistance funds are dedicated. The levy for General Assistance is specific to the delivery of General Assistance benefits to eligible township residents. Additionally, there are income / asset guidelines for the delivery of such benefits. GATI has adopted the official position that if a township intends to offer assistance to COVID-19 impacted residents such funds must be TOWN FUNDS and NOT General Assistance funds. A township could designate a budget line item for COVID-19 assistance in the town fund

and distribute through an individually adopted application process. There are some provisions outlined in the public aid code reflective of a natural disaster deemed by the federal or state government. However, without statewide application and delivery it is difficult to apply a state-wide standard that will be equitable and fair statewide.

Q: IF WE WANT TO CONTINUE TO HAVE MEETINGS ELECTRONICALLY IN MAY WHAT ARE OUR OPTIONS?

A: We have been reviewing several electronic communication platforms during this pandemic to assist townships in continuing to meet in the most effective way. The list currently includes (but is not limited to) **ZOOM, GO TO MEETINGS, FACETIME, FREECONFERENCECALL.COM**. All of them offer a portion of their service free but may require an additional subscription service for longer calls or calls after a trial period. The bottom line is that services are available to make this happen.

During this difficult time of change, we ask that you remain patient. We appreciate your willingness to work together and keep the goals and objectives of township government there for the residents of your communities. We are doing all we can to inform you of changes to your statutorily required practices in township government. On behalf of all of us at the TOI office we wish your health and safety as we move together as a community. 

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