



# E SOUTHAMPTON TOWN NEWSLETTER

JAY SCHNEIDERMAN, SUPERVISOR

JOHN BOUVIER, COUNCILMAN • RICK MARTEL, COUNCILMAN

JULIE LOFSTAD, COUNCILWOMAN • TOMMY JOHN SCHIAVONI, COUNCILMAN

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC SPECIAL EDITION

### THANK YOU FROM THE SUPERVISOR AND TOWN BOARD

During the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were reminded of just how incredibly hardworking and talented our staff is. We needed to keep this town operational and each department worked tirelessly to meet the demand. Some of our employees worked from home, others from their offices with limited staff, and still others were in the field maintaining our parks, beaches and roads, or providing public safety. We have never been more proud of our employees and the sacrifices they made and wanted to share some of the incredible stories with you. We wish all of our employees and their families good health as we continue fighting this pandemic.

*Supervisor Jay Schneiderman*

*Councilman John Bouvier*

*Councilman Rick Martel*

*Councilwoman Julie Lofstad*

*Councilman Tommy John Schiavoni*

### I. TOWN OPERATIONS

When Governor Andrew Cuomo ordered New York State on PAUSE in March, only essential workers were permitted to continue working during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the direction of Southamptton Town Supervisor Jay Schneiderman, some essential workers were authorized to work from home, while others continued working in Town buildings. Some worked on rotating shifts to adhere to CDC social distance guidelines.

During the days leading up to the State shutdown, our IT department worked feverishly to make sure that Town workers who needed to work from home were set up through the Town remote system. It was a massive undertaking on short notice. IT was the glue that kept the “working from home” model together. Additionally, many Town departments continued to use and enhance our online services on the Town’s website, allowing constituents to conduct business online without having to leave their home or offices.



## TOWN ONLINE ENHANCED

Several years ago, the Town began offering online services for many permits, payments, licenses and other services and that proved to be invaluable when Town offices were closed to the public. The Town Trustees office was busy accepting more than 4,000 applications since the state shutdown began in March. Although many building trades were stopped under New York on PAUSE, building inspections continued, keeping contractors informed about what still needed to be done in order to obtain final approval. "I would like to commend IT and SEA-TV for helping us continue to do our jobs through the virtual world," said Janice Scherer, Town Planning and Development Administrator. "We were able to keep working with the Chief Building Inspector Dennis O'Rourke and the Town Attorney's office to keep projects in the Land Management office and Building Department on the front burner."

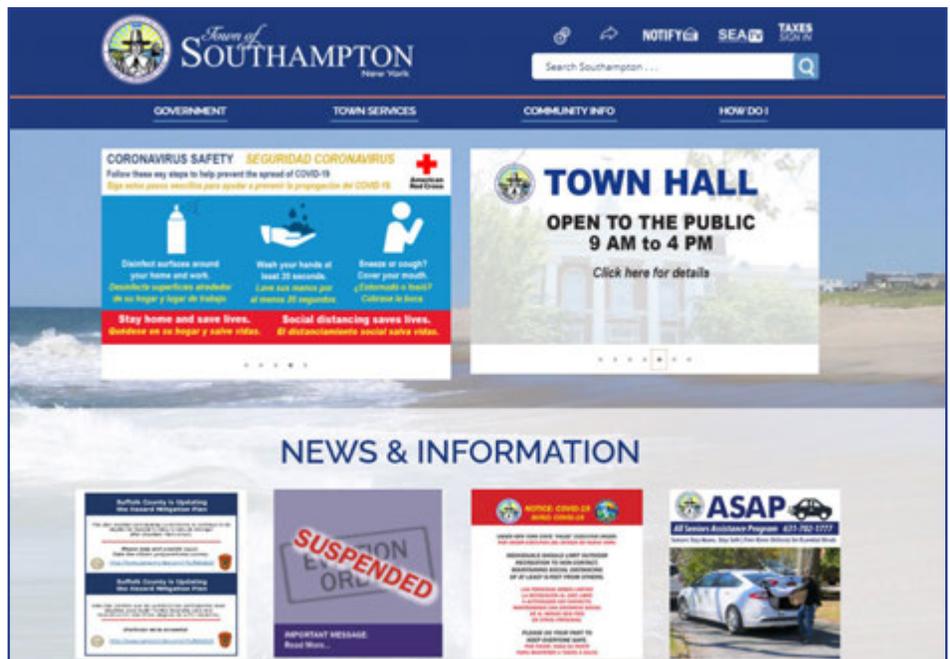
Despite the COVID-19 state shutdown, the Community Preservation Fund collected the 2% transfer tax at a remarkable pace. CPF Manager Lisa Kombrink said, "During April, May and June CPF collected \$15,000,000. I did closings in my backyard!"

Town Clerk Sundy Schermeyer's offices remained busy throughout the state shutdown and continued operations providing essential services to residents and also to the Town Board such as, recording various board meetings and accepting many filings associated with the pandemic. The Clerk's office also worked closely with many funeral directors issuing burial permits and death certificates while they faced new challenges do to coronavirus limitations and restrictions.

The pandemic also put a freeze on traditional weddings, but the Clerk's office was tapped to perform a virtual wedding on National TV! "It was really a touching story, the bride was an emergency room nurse working tirelessly through the height of the pandemic and the groom was doing everything he could to support her. There were 70 groups viewing the Zoom ceremony on one computer and me performing the ceremony on another, and not a dry eye in the house. Their family and friends were so happy for them", said Schermeyer. "With the stress that these two young people were under, it was a privilege to be a part of their joyous union."

Keeping the public informed was critical when the state was placed on PAUSE. The Supervisor's and Council offices were open to take calls from the public. Our Communications Department and the Citizens Response Center (CRC), kept the public and press informed through its website, social media and email. An increase in signage went up around town directing the public of CDC guidelines and new restrictions. Utilizing today's technology and SEA TV, countless conference calls and numerous Zoom board meetings kept essential services running. Human Resources kept track of rotating schedules, Municipal Works stepped up cleaning routines and kept the transfer stations open and the Tax Receiver's Office continued to collect taxes while adhering to the Governor's deadline extension. The Town Assessor's office was also busy hearing tax grievances by phone, mail, email and virtually. "Anyone who had a grievance, we addressed it by being creative," said Sole Town Assessor Lisa Goree.

When the Governor placed the state on Pause, the increase in the town population shifted into what would normally be seen during the height of the summer season. The second home population suddenly exploded while Town services remained steady. The Town Comptroller's office kept the lights on and paid the bills, and Town operations ran smoothly. Interestingly, Animal Control noticed a big increase in the number of people walking their dogs on the beach in March and April that would normally not start until after Memorial Day. The animal shelter also saw an increase in the number of people who wanted to foster pets during the shutdown.





## SAFE REOPENING

When the State directed Long Island to reopen under Phase 1, Town Hall and other offices reopened to the Public on June 8th by appointment only. Under CDC guidelines, all employees and visitors are required to wear face coverings and maintain 6-foot social distance. As phases of reopening continue, appointments are no longer required, but safety measures and limited access remains. To adhere to additional safety precautions our town's Building Maintenance department swiftly installed Plexiglass partitions and visible step markers to direct visitors inside and outside of our buildings. Board meetings returned to Town Hall on June 23rd but look very different now. Members of the Boards sit at the dais, spaced six feet apart. The number of audience members are limited to ten and those wishing to speak before the Board must make an appointment by calling 631-702-1777. Written comments can be read into the public record but must be submitted through the Clerk's office up to two hours before the scheduled meeting through email at [townclerk@southamptontownny.gov](mailto:townclerk@southamptontownny.gov)

## II. PUBLIC SAFETY



### POLICE DEPARTMENT WORKED AT FULL FORCE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES WORKED AROUND THE CLOCK

While many departments permitted some employees to work from home during the height of the pandemic, the Southampton Town Police Department required workers to remain at the ready and in some cases take extraordinary steps to keep everyone safe. "During a health emergency, we need to make sure our officers are safe while keeping the community safe," said Police Chief Steven Skrynecki. "Responding to calls meant everyone had to have the appropriate personal protective equipment and in some cases suit up in protective clothing before entering a home or a crime scene. I commend my officers for their vigilance in an effort to control the spread of the virus."

Similar to the Police Department, our Code Enforcement, Animal Control, Emergency Management and Fire Marshal's offices continued operations. Ryan Murphy, our Town Code Compliance and Emergency Management Administrator, who oversees those departments, served as both trouble shooter and interpreter of the Governor's Executive Orders. He had just started his job with the Town in February. He worked in a similar job with the County and that prior knowledge and working relationship with the County was a great asset to the Town. Murphy guided the implementation of new safety measures including the installation of Plexiglass partitions in offices throughout the Town and the daily temperature checks and other social distancing rules. He also directed the Fire Marshal's office to help businesses reopen safely, including facilitating outdoor dining at restaurants.

The wheels of Justice did not come to a halt during the State shutdown. Though the courts were closed to the public, arraignments were held virtually through SKYPE and pre-trial conferences were held by Zoom. "I actually think some judges prefer doing some business by Zoom or SKYPE and I wouldn't be surprised if this technology isn't used more often in the future," said Town Attorney James Burke. Mournfully, we lost a member of the court staff to COVID-19. Roxanna Flores was a Spanish interpreter who worked for the Court for ten years. We honor her memory.



### REMEMBERED

Roxana Flores, 47, Spanish interpreter for  
Southampton Town Justice Court

### III. SERVING COMMUNITY NEEDS DURING THE STATE SHUTDOWN

#### ALL SENIORS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (ASAP)

A program born out of necessity to help seniors shelter in place during the pandemic turned out to be a huge success. ASAP was designed to deliver food, prescriptions and other necessities to seniors in order to keep them safe at home. Some Town employees were reassigned to implement the program. They helped pick up the items and used Town vehicles to make the deliveries. More than 20 merchants were involved, providing more than 1,500 deliveries to over 1,000 very satisfied seniors. The program ended when Town Hall reopened to the public in June.



#### TOWN LITTER CREW (TLC)

The COVID-19 Pandemic prompted the widespread use of face masks and gloves but a lot of the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was being discarded improperly causing both an unhealthy and unsightly amount of trash in our parks, beaches, parking lots and along our roadways. To address the issue, the Town Board founded the TLC to clean it up. Two-person crews are now dispatched throughout the Town each day to help Parks and Recreation workers and Highway Department staff clean up the additional trash. The workers are seasonal for now, but if necessary, they could be retained after the summer season.



#### COMMUNITY SERVICES

At the start of the pandemic, the Town had no option but to close the senior centers for gatherings and congregate meals. As a result, its Meals on Wheels, Youth Services, Domestic Violence Advocacy programs exploded in demand. Before the pandemic, 300 meals were prepared each day. When the pandemic hit, that number jumped to 500! “We quickly went into overdrive,” said Housing and Community Services Director Diana Weir. “The staff at our Hampton Bays facility prepared enough meals to deliver to seniors to cover a few days at a time and everyone made it work, from the cooks to the delivery staff.” Other community service agencies also worked tirelessly during the State shutdown. Our Youth Bureau kept in touch with kids to keep them connected and occupied during this isolating time and meals were provided for those who were dependent on free or reduced lunch through school programs. Our domestic violence outreach counselors were also called on frequently because unfortunately, domestic violence increased during this time.

#### ALL FOR THE EAST END (AFTEE)

When the pandemic hit, our East End food pantries were suddenly overrun with an increase in demand of recipients for food. Many of our local residents who work in the hospitality industry such as restaurants, bars, hotels, landscaping and golf courses were out of jobs and had to choose whether to pay rent or buy food. A nonprofit organization AFTEE, was tapped to help create a Feed the Need campaign. With the help of some generous donors, including the Town of Southampton, food pantries were able to meet the demands. The Town also donated storeroom space for freezers and refrigerators at the Bridgehampton Senior Center to help nearby pantries store food for distribution. “This is a great example of the community coming together to help our neighbors and friends during a very challenging time,” said Supervisor Schneiderman.

#### BEACHES, PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

In order to open beaches to the public in time for the Memorial Day weekend, the Town Parks Director devised a phased-in plan that would follow CDC and State guidelines. Beach capacity was limited to 50 percent. Lifeguard chairs were spread out and beachgoers were required to sit six feet apart from others. Face coverings and shoes were required in the pavilions. During the first phase, no day passes were sold. Eventually, a limited number of day passes were sold, but only on weekdays. Drones were used to monitor crowd size. “The public cooperated beautifully and paid attention to lifeguards and park attendants who reminded beachgoers of the social distancing rules,” said Parks Director Kristen Doulos.

#### ROAD END BEACHES ARE RESTRICTED

As the weather started getting nicer, the lure of open beaches and good fishing became inviting for many out-of-town visitors. Suddenly, thanks to a good fishing app, there were hundreds of people descending on a normally quiet residential beach in North Sea looking for porgies. Hundreds flocked to the tiny bay front beach. Many camped out and parked up and down the road. Police, Bay Constables, Code Enforcement officers and Town Trustees responded and Supervisor Schneiderman issued an Executive Order to limit parking at road end beaches by permit only during the pandemic in order to keep the public safe. Many restrictions still remain in effect.