



City of Takoma Park

City Manager Comments

Report of May 6, 2020

Information to Share

COVID-19 Updates

Discussions Regarding Reopening

Across the country, various states and other jurisdictions are planning to begin reopening some activities from the stay-at-home provisions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There are efforts to coordinate the reopening steps in the National Capital Region around Washington, DC. There are also regular discussions of the Governors of Maryland and Virginia and the DC Mayor. Nevertheless, each jurisdiction has the authority to make their own choices. Many of the choices can affect the City of Takoma Park as people live, work, attend school, and shop across jurisdictional borders in this region.

Takoma Park staff are considering service-provision options based on the decisions made at these other levels of government. Today, for example, it was announced that Maryland public schools would remain functioning remotely for the rest of the school year. That affects the City of Takoma Park's before and after school programs. We are continuing to evaluate options for service delivery and will be sharing information as we obtain greater clarity on reopening plans in these other jurisdictions. I am fortunate to be the Chair of the Council of Governments Chief Administrative Officers committee where much of this is being discussed. Still, the major determinants of reopening are the public health metrics and on those, we have a good ways to go yet to meet the standards for opening most activities.

We are also feet-on-the-ground working with residents and business owners in Takoma Park as they face the difficult impacts of the pandemic and closures. Thank you to the City Council for prioritizing COVID-19 assistance in the FY21 budget!

Scam Alerts

Please be aware of the following scam that is circulating regarding Montgomery County's Emergency Assistance Relief Payment (EARP) for people who do not qualify for the IRS relief payment. Other reminders are below.

EARP Scam Alert:

Among the several scams going around, the latest one is about scammers contacting clients that they can help them get Montgomery County's Emergency Assistance Relief Payment (EARP). They ask clients for their personal information to set up a "PayPal account." *Please let people know that the County will mail EARP checks, to not pay for this free assistance, and do*

not set up any kind of account. Be extra careful about what information is given over the telephone and never disclose personal information!

Scams related to the IRS stimulus:

<https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/avoid-scams-know-the-facts-on-how-the-irs-contacts-taxpayers>

Homeowners in need of legal advice about mortgage forbearance and foreclosure

Civil Justice and the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service are providing free one-on-one legal advice and consultation for homeowners facing foreclosure who do not have legal representation. There are no income restrictions.

Foreclosure attorneys will:

- Answer questions about foreclosure mediation
- Give legal advice about your foreclosure
- Help you understand court papers and documents you received about your foreclosure

Helpline 443-808-0076 Mondays 1:30 pm—6:00 pm Wednesdays 8:00 am—12:30 pm

We will be hosting a town hall meeting with Civil Justice and the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service on Thursday, May 21, 2020 at 6:00 pm.

Assistance with Bank Garnishment of Stimulus Funds

Residents who have had stimulus funds garnished by a creditor or debt collector can get those dollars returned by contacting Attorney Alexa Bertinelli at Civil Justice. They can be reached at 410-706-0174.

Town Hall Meeting on May 12th with Catholic University, Columbus School of Law's Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic

Lawyers from the Clinic will provide information to residents who have controversies with the IRS, payment agreements with the IRS, and other tax related issues. The town hall will also provide information about free tax preparation sites that are available for residents.

Mini-Grant Program is Continuing

Due to additional contributions to the City's Mini-Grant program to assist small businesses, we have been able to help 31 small businesses (about 35%) from the 100+ approved applications we received several weeks ago. About half of the funds have come from donations – THANK YOU! There is a contract approval process before checks can be mailed; we will soon be going into our fourth round of this process.