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## April 9, 2020

- I. Easter Sunday Bells
- II. GRC and DLGS Offer Additional Recommendations Regarding Response to OPRA Requests
- III. Primary Election Day Moved to July 7

**Municipal Clerks:** Please forward to your Mayor, Governing Body and Department Heads.

To assist in providing guidance and information we have created a [COVID-19 resource page](#). We will continue to update the page as we get pertinent information and include announcements in our Daily Updates.

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### I. Easter Sunday Bells

(Sharing this from NJLM 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Mayor William Chegwiddden, Wharton)

We've asked our churches in the Borough of Wharton to ring their bells at 10 a.m. on Sunday morning in a show of unity. This idea came from Janet Hoven, Mayor of Chester Borough, during one of the many communications the Morris County Mayors recently had. All the Mayors agreed it would be a beautiful sound to hear on Easter Sunday across the County of Morris and our State. We hope it will lift everyone's spirits and renew faith in humanity by remembering all the things we are still grateful for. During this time please keep in mind all of those who have been working tirelessly on the frontline to ensure our health, safety, and welfare.

### II. GRC and DLGS Offer Additional Recommendations Regarding Response to OPRA Requests

The Government Records Council (GRC) has issued a [Special Statement](#) regarding [P.L.](#)

[2020, c.10](#) and COVID-19 impacts on the Open Public Records Act (OPRA) and offering guidance for records custodians dealing with requests during these unprecedented times.

Among the topics discussed in this Special Statement is the timeliness of responses to OPRA requests given that many public offices have been closed, limited access to records, and that resource may have been diverted to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Special Statement also provides further guidance on what the GRC would consider “reasonable effort” to respond to requests, as outlined in P.L. 2020, c.10, which provides that OPRA’s statutory deadlines do not apply during certain declared emergencies.

In addition to the GRC Special Statement, the Division of Local Government Services (DLGS) offered the following recommendations, “when responding to OPRA requests, local government records custodians document in writing any emergency-related barriers to providing the requestor with a final response within the standard OPRA response timeframe. Examples of such barriers can include building access restrictions, or a delay in availability of personnel needed to provide responsive records to the custodian or review responsive records to determine necessary redactions. As when requesting an extension of time to respond under normal circumstances, the custodian should inform the requestor in writing of the specific reasons for the delay, as well as soonest possible date after the normal statutory deadline by which the custodian reasonably expects to respond under the circumstances. To the greatest extent possible, the custodian’s initial response to the requestor should adhere to the standard timeline for an OPRA request response.”

This information should be reviewed with your municipal records custodian and municipal attorney for further guidance.

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### III. Primary Election Day Moved to July 7

Governor Murphy signed [Executive Order 120](#) moving the June primary election from June 2, 2020 to Tuesday, July 7, 2020. In addition, any election scheduled between May 13, 2020 and July 7, 2020 is postponed and rescheduled to July 7, 2020. All statutory deadlines for primary election, except for deadlines that occur prior to April 11, 2020, for a primary election must be calculated using the July 7, 2020. The petition for independent candidates for the general election is 4:00 p.m. on July 7, 2020.

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