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May 29, 2020

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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.

I. State

a. COVID-19 Update

Yesterday, the Governor reported an additional 1,261 positive lab test results for COVID-19, for a statewide total of 157,815. He also reported an additional 66 deaths attributed to the virus, for a statewide total of 11,401.

Also, the Governor stated that the Administration will start unrolling guidance for a number of areas in the reopening of the State. In the upcoming days, perhaps as soon as today, we may see guidance on restaurants and seating capacity, summer camps and programs and others.

Please see this item from the [League's Daily Update for Tuesday](#) and the item below regarding the Murphy Administration's proposed changes to the State's current budget

and the anticipated State loss of revenues looking ahead to next year.

Please see the item below regarding the order from the Director of Division of Local Government Services and Local Finance Notice dealing with the extensions of certain fiscal, budgetary, property tax, licensure, and other deadlines. These were sent to your financial professionals on Thursday evening.

Last Friday, the Governor signed the following Executive Order as a result of the pandemic:

[Executive Order 148](#) Governor Murphy Signs Executive Order Increasing Capacity Limit on Outdoor Gatherings

See the League [COVID-19 page](#) for all our resources and communications.

In light of the current pandemic, we remind you of NJ Mental Health Cares, the state's behavioral health information and referral service offers assistance to people dealing with anxiety and stress related to the COVID-19 outbreak. Residents can call 1-866-202-HELP (4357) for free, confidential support. NJ Mental Health Cares will be answered from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week by live trained specialists.

Contact: Michael F. Cerra, Assistant Executive Director, mcerra@njlm.org, 609-695-3481, ext. 120.

b. Legislative Focus on State Three-Month Budget Plan Begins

Yesterday in Trenton, the Assembly Budget Committee heard testimony from the nonpartisan Office of Legislative Services' Budget and Finance Officer, Frank Haines, and State Treasurer, Elizabeth Maher Muoio, regarding Governor Murphy's proposed Supplemental Appropriations/De-appropriations plan that will govern State spending during the extended Fiscal Year. As a result of the decision to lengthen the State's current Fiscal Year (SFY '20) through September, both Houses will need to pass a bill before the end of June in order to keep the State's budget in balance during the following three months.

Back in March when the decision was made to postpone the beginning of New Jersey's FY 2021, your League Officers – President Jim Perry, Committeeman, Hardwick; First Vice President Janice Kovach, Mayor, Clinton Town; Second Vice President William Chegwidden, Mayor, Wharton; and Third Vice President Sue Howard, Mayor, Monmouth Beach – wrote to the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the State Treasurer, the Senate President, and the Speaker of the General Assembly. That letter recounted municipal efforts in response to the pandemic, projected revenue losses, and highlighted the strain that the virus would impose on local budgets.

Our Officers called on State decision makers to respect the importance of strong municipalities to our citizens, and to the State's economic well-being. The letter emphasized the vital importance of municipal property tax relief funding – the Energy Tax Receipts and Consolidated Municipal Property Tax Relief Assistance programs (ETR/CMPTRA) – and urged State budget makers to preserve that funding through SFY '20 and SFY '21.

Thanks to their leadership, and thanks to all of you who reached out to State officials on

this, Governor Murphy's proposal will not cut crucial ETR/CMPTRA funding. This is a welcome departure from actions taken by previous Governors facing less devastating revenue shortfalls. We thank the Governor and his Administration for this response to our outreach.

While the Governor is asking the Legislature to delay the September ETR/CMPTRA payments (30% of total allocation) until October, it appears that the Administration intends to deliver the August (45%) payments on time.

The Administration is also requesting legislative authorization to use a portion of State government's Federal CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) funding to create a \$250 million Local Government Relief Fund. The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) will administer this as reimbursement-based grants to local governments for eligible CRF related costs that will not be reimbursable through other sources, including FEMA. As required by the Federal CARES Act, local units could only use this funding to cover substantial COVID-19 related expenditures that were not included in the most recently approved budget, and that are incurred between March and the end of this calendar year. DCA would be directed to prioritize the 12 counties that were not eligible for their own Coronavirus Relief Fund allocations.

We will keep you posted as the Legislature continues its consideration of the Governor's proposal. And we urge you to contact your State Legislators, voicing your support for the Administration's recommended preservation of ETR/CMPTRA funding, and for the \$250 million Local Government Relief Fund.

Contact: Jon Moran, Senior Legislative Analyst, jmoran@njlm.org, 609-695-3481, ext. 121.

c. Division of Local Government Services Extends Various Deadlines

The Division of Local Government Services has issued [Local Finance Notice 2020-13](#) outlining extensions to various fiscal, property tax and licensed officials deadlines that the Director extended by issuing a deadline extension [order](#).

Included among the extended deadlines is the deadline for calendar year municipal audits to September 30 and mailing of estimated tax bills to July 31. In addition, any DLGS professional certification as well as the tax assessor certification, that is expiring on or after May 15, 2020 renewal period has been temporarily extended by one year.

We suggest you review the Local Finance Notice and order with your administrator and financial professionals.

Contact: Lori Buckelew, Senior Legislative Analyst, lbuckelew@njlm.org, 609-695-3481, ext. 112.

d. Governor Signs Legislation Establishing Firm Tax Appeal Date for 2020

Yesterday Governor Murphy signed into law [A-4157](#), which extends the statutory deadline to file a property tax appeal from May 1, 2020 to July 1, 2020 and provides the County Board of Taxation until September 30, 2020 to render a decision on a tax appeal. The deadline only applies for this year's tax appeals and does not apply to tax appeals in

counties operating under the Gloucester County Pilot Program or the Monmouth County Demonstration Program.

In response to COVID-19, NJ Supreme Court Chief Justice Rabner issued an order on [March 19, 2020](#) extending property tax appeals to the later of May 1, 2020 or 30 days following the Governor's determination that the state of emergency under Executive Order 103 has ended. Chief Justice Rabner issued two more orders on [March 27, 2020](#) and [April 6, 2020](#) maintaining that the statutory deadline to file a property tax appeal extends to the later of May 1, 2020 or the expiration of Executive Order 103.

The new law, which the League supported, took effect immediately, supersedes the Court Order, and is retroactive to April 1, 2020. The law will expire on December 31, 2020.

Contact: Lori Buckelew, Senior Legislative Analyst, lbuckelew@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x112.

e. Updated EPA and CDC Guidance on Cleaning Public Spaces

EPA and CDC recently released [updated guidance](#) to help facility operators and families properly clean and disinfect spaces. The guidance provides step-by-step instructions for public spaces, workplaces, businesses, schools, and homes. EPA has compiled a [list of disinfectant](#) products, including ready-to-use sprays, concentrates, and wipes, that can be used against COVID-19.

II. Federal

a. Portal Bridge Replacement Funding Coming

On Monday, New Jersey's U.S. Senators Bob Menendez and Cory Booker, along with our state's Members of the House Transportation Committee, Representatives Bill Pascrell Jr., Albio Sires, Donald Payne Jr., and Tom Malinowski, announced that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has awarded more than \$91.5 million in funding to advance replacement of the Portal Bridge and make other upgrades to improve service along Amtrak's Northeast Corridor (NEC).

Our National Passenger Rail Corporation, Amtrak, will receive \$55,100,000 toward the federal cost share for the Portal North Bridge Project. And New Jersey Transit (NJT) will get \$36,408,410 to reconstruct electrical substation 41 in Kearny, which was damaged by Superstorm Sandy. The station supplies power to a crucial stretch of the Northeast Corridor, between Newark Penn Station and Penn Station New York.

This is a major victory for Amtrak, NJT, and the thousands of daily commuters who depend on rail service between New Jersey and New York, as well as up and down the Northeast Corridor between Boston and Washington.

We thank all the Members of our state's Congressional Delegation and the Murphy Administration for working to overcome the many hurdles they confronted, before this Federal commitment. This is a great step forward in continuing efforts to convince Federal officials of the need for, and the national importance of, the Gateway Project.

Contact: Jon Moran, Senior Legislative Analyst, jmoran@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x121.

b. Local Budgets Await Federal Lifeline

Responding to the public health crisis, and its impact on workers and businesses, Congress has passed, and President Trump has signed, four COVID-19 response bills. All of those bills addressed important priorities. But none of them prioritized the impact of the pandemic on municipalities.

Since then, New Jersey's Congressional Delegation has played a leading role in ongoing efforts to send a lifeline to New Jersey municipalities. All local governments, regardless of population, urgently need direct federal funding to continue to fight COVID-19 and protect their residents through the summer and beyond. The citizens of small towns matter just as much as the citizens of big counties, and New Jersey municipal employees contribute at least as much to society as private sector workers.

The NLC, our partner in Washington, has launched a national campaign to focus attention on what municipalities are doing in response to the pandemic, on what they need from Washington to continue to do it, and on what they will need to restore local economies and the social fabric of their communities, severely weakened by the stress of COVID-19. The [Cities Are Essential](#) campaign calls for substantial direct federal aid and economic relief over the next two years to support all communities who support America's people. More than 170 business and community organizations have already endorsed this effort, aiming to achieve one clear goal: Direct federal support for cities, towns, townships, boroughs, and villages, regardless of size.

Please thank Senators Menendez and Booker and your District's Representative in the House for their efforts on our behalf. And please reach out to your business community and to your non-profit service providers. They need to add their voices to yours.

See our [recent Town Crier blogpost](#) for more details.

Contact: Jon Moran, Senior Legislative Analyst, jmoran@njlm.org, 609-695-3481, ext. 121.

III. Also of Interest

a. The Online Mini Conference

June 10, 11, 12, 2020
Location: Your Computer


The NJLM Online Mini Conference is now open for registration. The Conference will take place over June 10, 11, and 12, 2020 and offer 12 different webinars for attendees to join for one low price. CEUs are available for Finance Officers, Tax Collectors, Public Works, Municipal Clerks, Accountants, Recycling Professionals, and New Jersey Attorneys. Some attendees can earn up to **16.5 CEUs in three days!** Cost for Members is \$115 per person and \$130 for nonmembers.

For a schedule of webinars and the registration form please visit the [Mini Conference website](#).

If you have any questions please contact Danielle Holland-Htut at 609-695-3481, ext. 118, or dholland@njlm.org.




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