

DC Legislature debating options on April meetings

by Jim Donick

The Chairman of the County Legislature, A. Gregg Pulver, recently sent out a letter canceling the originally scheduled April meeting of that body.

He noted that the County Executive, in responding to the coronavirus crisis had, at the time, banned all meetings and gatherings in the county of more than 20 people. The legislature's meetings are generally significantly larger than that.

In response, a number of the Democrat members of the legislature have called upon Pulver to rescind this plan. Their letter, which can be found in the Letters to the Editor section of this issue of the Northern Dutchess News, outlines a number of objections. They ask that, if the meeting cannot be held as normally scheduled, the Chairman should hold the meeting on-line or via the telephone.

They list a number of issues related to the COVID-19 crisis that they feel should be discussed, including funding of emergency food supplies, public hand-washing stations for the homeless, and moratoria on mortgage foreclosures and utility shutoffs.

Several of these points have been subsequently addressed at the state level.

Another major issue the letter outlines is an observation that this action demonstrates an undue deference to the wishes of the County Executive.

Minority Leader Rebecca Edwards (D-Town of Poughkeepsie) said this is a dangerous precedent.

"The Legislature is a co-equal branch of County Government. The County Executive and the Executive branch do not, on paper, and should not, in practice, dictate legislative business. We are, by County Charter, responsible for our own rules and schedules."

Chairman Pulver's office has responded as follows:

"Each year, the Legislature passes a resolution (this year, Resolution 2020008) which sets dates for our meetings. If we want to change the date of a meeting or hold it in a location other than the Legislative Chambers, we are required to pass a resolution. If the Emergency Order limiting gatherings to 20 people is lifted by our April meetings, then they will be held in our Chambers. If not, we have the option of doing it by phone. But technically, the in-person meeting will have to be canceled as it has a defined location. An April meeting held by phone will technically be an 'emergency meeting' per our Legislative Rules because it was not authorized by a resolution."

Pulver added, "In light of the national health emergency and the county-wide Emergency Order limiting gatherings of more than 20 persons, we have decided to cancel meetings in our Legislative Chambers while that Emergency Order is in place. We have 25 Legislators plus staff, so we easily approach double the maximum amount. Should the Legislature need to convene while that Order is in place, we have the option of meeting by phone."

'Red Hook Responds' to help local residents during COVID-19 outbreak

by Stacey van den Thoorn

Dan Budd, chef/owner of Taste Budd's cafe in Red Hook, has embarked upon an endeavor in response to the situation at-hand created as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

"Red Hook Responds" was planned to be up and running as of Tuesday, March 24.

Budd said his idea for this necessary service - specifically for ill home-bound individuals and the elderly - came after the initial shock of the seemingly bleak future for him, his restaurant and the entire community.

"When this crisis initially hit, I realized my finances would crumble. I had to let employees go. I got very stressed and very sad," said Budd. "Halfway through that day, I realized I had to stop worrying about finances and needed to focus on humanity and a way to save lives and the community."

It was then that Budd, a member of the Red Hook Economic Development Committee (an advisory committee to the town board) began to strategize and plan "Red Hook Responds" in an effort to help residents of the town of Red Hook.

Budd said "Red Hook Responds" is going to work with all of the existing volunteer organizations that assist the community during times of crisis.

"We do not want to get in the way of any existing programs currently helping the community and will not interrupt existing efforts," said Budd. "Due to the nature of this crisis, things have to be done very differently. We can't bring people to the soup kitchen, we have to bring the food to the people. We need to do that by harnessing a local network of volunteers to help save lives and ease hardships."

"Red Hook Eats" was a program Budd was beginning to initiate, where local food service professionals and kitchen facilities would be used for distance preparation of bulk foods which would then be picked up and distributed to those in need. "Red Hook Eats" spawned "Red Hook Responds," which includes a cadre of volunteers and will be coordinated via an online operating platform at redhookresponds.org - which was built by a team of three teen volunteers.

The platform includes a database of all existing local volunteer organizations, which will be utilized and will enable individual volunteers to sign up and be scheduled online to help the community by delivering food and/or medication, providing transportation to medical appointments, assisting with critical home repairs, as well as offering social and emotional supports in these trying and uncertain times.

For those who do not have computer or Internet access, the system will also incorporate VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) where people can phone in their request for assistance or offer their availability to help out. This part of the system will be manned by at least four volunteer operators who can work remotely to assist in the scheduling of volunteers and assist in the structuring of plans to meet peoples needs.

"There are a lot of working parts and it's a monumental task," said Budd. "It is a good-faith effort to do something that could really make a difference. Our young tech team is very energized and working very hard. I am on a mission to make this happen and to help my community. It's about compassion and kindness."

Individuals who would like to help become a volunteer should visit redhookresponds.org.

LAGRANGE LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING SET AS WEBINAR

The LaGrange Library Board of Trustees monthly meeting will be held Thursday, April 2, at 7 p.m.

In light of the current situation with COVID-19, this meeting will be held as a webinar, with the ability for the public to attend via their home computers by registering at [GoToMeeting](https://www.gotomeeting.com). Instructions for accessing the webinar will then be sent via email.

The GoToMeeting link is posted on the library's website at laglib.org.

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COVID-19 Outbreak – County, State Roundup: Great need spurs urgent action

continued from cover

- The state has required all hospitals statewide to develop plans that expand their capacity by at least 50 percent, with the goal of expanding capacity by 100 percent. State regulations affecting capacity have been temporarily waived. All elective, non-critical surgeries are canceled, effective March 25, which will free up around a quarter of existing hospital beds.

- Drug therapy trials were expected to start Tuesday. The state has acquired 70,000 doses of hydroxychloroquine, 10,000 doses of zithromax and 750,000 doses of chloroquine.

- On March 20, Cuomo enacted Matilda's Law to protect New Yorkers age 70+ and those with compromised immune systems. The measure requires this group of New Yorkers to stay home and limit home visitation to immediate family members or close friends in need of emergency assistance. If it is necessary to visit such individuals, the visitor should get pre-screened by taking temperature and seeing if person is exhibiting other flu-like symptoms. Both individuals should wear a mask for the duration of the visit.

- On March 19, the Governor announced the Department of Financial Services has issued a new directive to New York State mortgage servicers to provide 90-day mortgage relief to mortgage borrowers impacted by the novel coronavirus. The directive includes waiving mortgage payments based on financial hardship, no negative reporting to credit bureaus, grace period for loan modification, no late payment fees or online payment fees, and postponing or suspending foreclosures.

COUNTY

- As of Sunday evening, Dutchess County had 82 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

- NuVance Health, in cooperation with Dutchess and Ulster counties, openED two COVID-19 drive-through collection sites on Monday, March 23. The sites are the Intermodal Center at Dutchess Stadium on Route 9D in Fishkill and Tech City at 300 Enterprise Drive in Kingston. Enterprise Drive is easily accessible from either Route 209 or Route 9W via Boice Lane. These sites are used to collect samples from people who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. The samples will be sent off-site for testing. A person must have a physician's order before entering these locations.

- On Sunday, the Dutchess County Department of Behavioral & Community Health (DBCH) confirmed the first death relating to COVID-19 in Dutchess County. While specific information cannot be provided for privacy reasons, it was confirmed the individual was a 69-year-old male who developed respiratory distress and went directly to Mid-Hudson Regional Hospital where he was treated, but died on Friday, March 20. The individual had not been screened or monitored by DBCH prior to hospitalization.

- There are currently more than 60 positive cases of COVID-19 and the numbers are expected to increase as more testing becomes available this week. Staying home is critical to stop the spread of COVID-19 to flatten the curve.

- Dutchess County Parks currently remain open for people to enjoy "isolated

recreation" as Governor Cuomo has called it. This includes walking, running and enjoying the trails.

- The Dutchess Business Notification Network was created as a resource for local businesses to navigate the fast-changing guidelines in this challenging situation. Business owners are encouraged to direct all questions to the Network in lieu of contacting state agencies directly.

- Small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives and most private not-for-profits in all Mid-Hudson counties are now eligible to apply for SBA economic injury disaster loans. The SBA can provide up to \$2 million to help meet financial obligations and operating expenses that could have been met had the disaster not occurred. The loan amount will be based on the business' actual economic injury and the company's financial needs.

LONG-TERM POSTPONEMENTS & CANCELLATIONS (past March)

- The Bardavon Gala has been rescheduled to Sunday, Oct. 25, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets on sale now at [Ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com)

- Murder Cafe has canceled its scheduled performances for the next eight weeks.

- Kaatsbaan announced that in lieu of live classes and performances during March/April, it will live-stream masterclasses, studio visits/rehearsals and previously scheduled shows. A detailed schedule is available at www.kaatsbaan.org as well as on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

- DC Office for the Aging has postponed or canceled its upcoming programming until further notice. See this week's Golden Living column for details.

- Vassar Temple Community Seder, scheduled for April 8, has been canceled.

- Concerts in the Village has postponed its upcoming events in Kinderhook. Rescheduled concerts will be announced.

- The Rhinebeck Rotary Club canceled its May 18 Service Above Self Awards Dinner. This year's honorees—Kiki Steele as Citizen of the Year, The Center for Performing Arts at Rhinebeck as Organization of the Year, Spirit of Service Lifetime Achievement Award winner Joseph Phelan, and Paul Harris Award winners, Michelle Andrick and Bill Schaefer—will be honored at next year's dinner in May 2021.

- West Point Band has canceled its concerts through April 5. For additional information, visit <https://www.westpoint.edu/coronavirus>.

- "Shakespeare in Love," scheduled to run April 24-May 10 at The Center for Performing Arts at Rhinebeck, has been canceled.

- The Rhinebeck Chamber Music Society has canceled the remainder of its concerts this year. "We are hoping to reschedule all of the performances and tickets purchased for the current season will be honored," said RCMS President Joan Mander.

- County Players has canceled the remainder of its 62nd season. It plans to reopen in July.

- Beginning Saturday, March 28, Royal Carting will suspend town dump pickups for two weeks. This service is currently scheduled to resume on April 11. Regular town garbage pickups will remain in effect.