

May 2020

More Changes to OMA



The Open Meetings Act (OMA) Emergency Declaration was amended on April 15 and removed the language that virtual meetings are allowed only for "essential purpose," which means that municipalities can use virtual platforms for any kind of non-critical issue or business. The Order was also extended until May 15, 2020.

The Order states that:

"Adequate alternative means of public access shall mean measures that provide transparency and permit timely and effective public access to the deliberations of the public body. Such means may include, without limitation, providing public access through telephone, internet, or satellite-enabled audio or video conferencing or any other technology that enables the public to clearly follow the proceedings of the public body while those activities are occurring."

Please see the helpful [guidance available](#) for holding public meetings from the RI Department of Information Technology. The [APA-RI website](#) also has frequently-updated information, along with instructions and tips for running virtual meetings from several RI municipalities.

Census Response Rates

The 2020 Census is still underway: In fact, it has now been extended from July 31, 2020 to October 31, 2020! Have you responded? Go to the US Census website to fill out the Census online: my2020census.gov.

- The Rhode Island response rate is 54.1% as of May 2nd.
- We are ranked 30th out of all states for response.
- The US response rate is 56.3%.

RI municipalities with the highest response rates:

- Barrington- 74.4%
- North Kingstown- 67.5%
- East Greenwich- 66.8%

RI municipalities with the lowest response rates*:

- Central Falls- 32.9%
- Little Compton- 39.8%
- Providence- 40.4%

(*excluding New Shoreham)

Response rates by county are:

- Bristol- 64.4%
- Kent- 62.4%
- Newport- 55.2%
- Providence- 50.8%
- Washington- 53.9%

For more information on your municipality's current response rate (updated daily), please see the [RI Division of Statewide Planning's 2020 Census page](#). Join the [Census Coffee Hour](#) on May 5 at 10AM for Census activity updates.

SNEAPA 2020 Will Be Virtual

SNEAPA 2020

ENGAGE → EMPOWER → ENERGIZE

The annual Southern New England Conference of the American Planning Association ("SNEAPA") committee for 2020 has been hard at work since January planning for the next SNEAPA, scheduled for September 24 & 25 at the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence. Across the country, professional organizations are asking themselves the same questions: Will we be able to hold large, in-person conferences this year? Even if such gatherings are allowed, will people feel comfortable attending?

The SNEAPA 2020 Committee has been grappling with these questions as well. Here's what they want planners to know:

- Due to the ongoing uncertainty of the COVID-19 public health crisis and a desire to keep guests safe and healthy, *all in-person SNEAPA events for 2020 have been canceled.*
- The Committee is preparing to go virtual sometime this Fall, exploring options for "SNEAPA@Home."
- A survey will be emailed soon to hear what planners want from a virtual SNEAPA.
- When the Call for Session Proposals is released, please think of ways to present sessions virtually.
- The SNEAPA committee is committed to providing high-quality sessions with relevant and useful content, opportunities to network with colleagues from around the region, and venues to interact with vendors.

The SNEAPA Committee asks for your patience, understanding, flexibility, creativity, and good will as they work to bring you a different version of SNEAPA this year. Plan to check the [SNEAPA website](#) regularly for updates and information.

Brady's Bulletin



Another month has come and gone. In my head, I'm beginning to refer to things as "in captivity". The eighth staff meeting in captivity. The first scheduled public hearing in captivity. Yet, what I am experiencing, working from home, is nothing compared to the isolation that some face regularly: when I would complain about the necessity of minimizing shopping trips and missing events, I realize that my privilege is showing. We've never seen anything like this in our lifetimes (even those far older and wiser than I among us) and we've never experienced such far-reaching impacts, from the economy to mental health services; from small

businesses to large corporations; from sports and entertainment to family gatherings. This is a captivity born of compassion and care for others, of necessity, of knowns and of unknowns. We were already a nation deeply polarized, and, in some ways, the COVID-19 crisis has polarized us even further. Yet in other ways, it has brought people together: checking on your neighbors, drive-by birthday parades, buying from farms and food-related small business for at-home delivery, and small acts of kindness.

It occurred to me recently that twenty-five years ago (yeah, really, 25 years ago!) I was on a national APA panel about the impacts of telecommuting on future workforces and commuting patterns. I had been thinking, before this all began, that we were slow to adopt telecommuting policies, particularly at the state and municipal government level. Suddenly, this is no longer true: there's a steep learning curve (hello Zoom fatigue) and a lot of adaptation required.

There are many resources available: for individuals, for businesses, and for government: the national [American Planning Association COVID-19 Resources](#) site is a good place to start, as is our own [APA-RI site](#), but I am sure there are a number of links that we haven't discovered: do you have any favorites? From ways to support small business to places to donate (tomorrow is both Cinco de Mayo AND Giving Tuesday) to articles of interest, send me your links at Meredith.Brady@doa.ri.gov and I'll include a selection next month!

Last but not least, be kind to each other: "May the 4th Be With You!" (If you're Catholic, you may answer "And also with you!")

Upcoming Meetings

Due to the on-going health emergency, please check the links to see if meetings have been canceled.

[State Planning Council](#)
May 14- 9AM via Zoom

[Transportation Advisory Committee](#)
May 28- 5:30PM via Zoom

[Technical Committee](#)
June 12- 9AM via Zoom

All meetings are open to the public. Please click on the links to find out how to attend virtually.

PHOTO TRIVIA

Do you know where in RI this building is located? See the answer at the bottom of the newsletter.



Virtual Events

May 5 [Got LID? A Municipal Self-Assessment Tool for RI Municipalities](#) This webinar will showcase a new tool designed to help compare your municipality's development standards to national benchmarks for avoiding, reducing, and managing stormwater runoff. The "whys" and "hows" of the LID Site Planning and Design Techniques and additional supporting assistance will be discussed. Time: 2PM-3PM. Free.

May 6 [What Cities Are Doing About Housing & Homelessness During the Pandemic](#)

Explore solutions that cities around the country have already adopted to try to blunt the worst of the housing-related fallout from the pandemic. These solutions could be replicated elsewhere. Panel features the mayor of Cambridge, MA. Time: 1PM-2PM. Registration fee is pay-what-you-can.

May 8 [Climate Change Leadership Webinar Series: "Resilient Mystic Collaborative"](#)

This webinar spotlights the Resilient Mystic Collaborative (RMC), a voluntary partnership among neighboring communities in Greater Boston's Mystic River Watershed, which came out of a sense of urgency and commitment among municipal staff to work across political boundaries to address challenges and now includes eighteen municipalities. Time: 12PM-1PM. Government/non-profit: free; EBC member: \$15; non-member: \$25.

May 8 [Managing Shifts in Community Resilience Priorities in Light of COVID-19.](#) Climate change and sustainability initiatives are being sidelined as a result of the pandemic. Local government leaders will need to develop strategies for managing interruptions, preserving relationships, aligning initiatives with other more emergent or valued priorities, and revitalizing stalled efforts down the road. Time: 12PM-1PM. Free.

May 14 [2020 Urbanism Next Virtual Forum](#) The 2020 Urbanism Next Virtual Forum will discuss how emerging technologies shape the future of our cities: advances in emerging technology like the rise of e-commerce, and the growth of the sharing economy have profound effects on how we live, move, and spend our time in cities, and also on urban form and development. Time: 11:30AM-5PM (EST). Fee: \$125.

May 15 [Focus on Micromobility: Incorporating New Methods of Travel into the Planning Landscape webinar.](#) Attendees will hear from three leading practitioners in the emerging field of micromobility, each presenting a different angle on the changes that nimble, on-demand transportation options mean for street design and streetscapes, transit service, and travel patterns. Time: 1PM-2:30PM. Free. 1.5 CM.

May 19 [TOD Trends and Successes for Placemaking](#)webinar. Hear from the nation's leading TOD authority on business trends, new financing options, and from one of America's most successful TOD real estate developer on how his firm is weathering the current crisis to maintain values and keep projects moving forward. Time: 1PM-2PM. This event has varying registration fees.

May 22 [Project Management for Planners.](#) This webinar will provide participants with tools and techniques that planners can use to successfully manage planning projects. Discussion will center on the application of project management tools and techniques in the real world of planning. Time: 1PM-2:30PM. Free. 1.5 CM.

Anytime The [American Planning Association website](#) also lists live [planning webinars](#) offered by local chapters, as well as APA [online courses](#).

Grant Opportunities

May 11 [NEH CARES: Cultural Organizations grants deadline](#) The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has received supplemental funding to provide emergency relief to institutions and organizations working in the humanities that have been affected by the coronavirus. Proposed short-term projects should emphasize retaining or hiring humanities staff. Period of performance is June 15, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

May 15 [AARP Community Challenge grant deadline](#) (extended). The Community

Challenge provides small grants to fund "quick-action" projects that can help communities become more livable for people of all ages. Projects should improve housing, transportation, public space, technology ("smart cities"), civic engagement, and more. Winning projects must be completed by December 18, 2020.

May 18 [NRCS Grants for Reducing Stormwater Pollution application](#) deadline. USDA's Natural Resources Service (NRCS) is investing up to \$2.4 million in Rhode Island. NRCS and partners will work with private landowners and producers to implement a variety of conservation activities, including land management practices and systems, short-term land rentals, conservation easements and watershed structures.

May 26 [Farmers Market Promotion Program \(FMPP\) deadline \(extended\)](#) The USDA's FMPP funds projects that develop, coordinate and expand direct producer-to-consumer markets to help increase access to and availability of locally- and regionally-produced agricultural products by developing, expanding, and providing outreach and technical assistance to farmers markets, community-supported agriculture programs, agritourism, online sales or other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities.

May 26 [Regional Food System Partnerships \(RFSP\) program grant deadline \(extended\)](#). The USDA's RFSP program supports partnerships that connect public and private resources to plan and develop local or regional food systems. Effort is focused on building and strengthening local or regional food economy viability and resilience by alleviating unnecessary administrative and technical barriers for participating partners.

May 29 [Southeast New England Program \(SNEP\) Watershed Grant deadline](#). These grants support the goals and priorities of EPA's SNEP, a regional effort to promote a resilient ecosystem of clean water and sustainable communities . The grants target water pollution, habitat degradation, and other high-priority environmental issues, to foster sustainable coastal and watershed communities in RI and Southeastern MA.

May 29 [Agricultural Conservation Easements Program](#). The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service is accepting applications from state and local governments, non-governmental organizations and Native American Tribes that would like to protect working farmland through an Agricultural Land Easement. ACEP easements protect critical natural resources and encourage private landowners to maintain land for farming through the voluntary sale of an easement, which limits future development.

Planning Articles of Interest

[Passing budgets with public input during coronavirus times challenges RI towns](#)

[RI coastal town considers abandoning roads to floods as sea level rises](#)

[State Supreme Court sides with town in land use dispute](#)

[As trash piles up, RI municipalities faced with illegal dumping, recycling issues](#)

[Dreams of fields: park plan pits neighbors against each other](#)

[The real star of Andrew Cuomo's press briefings? His PowerPoints.](#)

Statewide Planning Staff

Click on staff person's name for email address:

Meredith Brady, Associate Director
401/222-6496

Benny Bergantino, Principal Planner
401/222-1755

Linsey Callaghan, Assistant Chief
401/222-6479

Paul Capotosto, Fiscal Management
Officer
401/222-6170

Michael D'Alessandro, AICP- Supervising
Planner
401/222-2177

Christina Delage Baza, Data Analyst I
401/222-6481

Vincent Flood, Data Analyst II
401/222-1243

Kim Gelfuso, Internet Communications
Specialist
401/222-5764

Caitlin Greeley, Principal Planner
401/222-2848

Paul Gonsalves, Principal Planner
401/222-1756

Roberta Groch, AICP- Assistant Chief
401/222-4720

Nancy Hess, Supervising Planner
401/222-6480

Benjamin Jacobs, Principal Research
Technician
401/222-3949

Maria Mignanelli, Chief Implementation
Aide

Kevin Nelson, Supervising Planner
401/222-2093

Joshua O'Neill, AICP- Supervising Planner
401/222-4849

Mason Perrone, Principal Planner
401/222-7966

Catherine Pitassi, Executive Assistant
401/222-7901

Water Resources Board staff:

Kathleen Crawley, Acting General
Manager

Timothy Stagnitta, Programming Services
Officer

PHOTO TRIVIA ANSWER:

The Western Hotel (late 1700s)

Nasonville (Burrillville)

Photo: Google Earth