

➤ CORRESPONDENCE

1. John Fiorillo (April 21, 2020 @ 5:27P)

Supervisor Collins:

I have read with interest the Public comments submitted for presentation and discussion at tonight's meeting. I know that all those making comments about temporary, transient or guest accommodations are making suggestions each believes will make our community safer during this pandemic. However, as a former senior public health official in the City of New York, everyone needs to understand the role of government in this situation.

Governor Cuomo has declared a Public Health Emergency statewide. When this kind of emergency is declared public health officials at all levels of government have special extraordinary powers. These must be taken into consideration when implementing guidance, laws or new regulations. I know that the new Board members are, by and large, unfamiliar with government process and procedures. However, some of those procedures may be helpful in addressing the safety of the community during this crisis.

I agree with those who say that all transient accommodation should be treated equally and the strong recommendation that all arriving in town from anywhere beyond its borders self-quarantine for 14 days. As some have suggested, this should apply to all arrivals whether homeowners, renters or guests. But in addition to that, those arriving as guests but who intend to leave for elsewhere -- whether paid or unpaid -- pose a special problem. This is where public health professionals can help. Using the authority of the County Commissioner of Health to protect the community from health hazards, hosts of those leaving a residence can be required to certify that a "hazard clean" is done after such guests depart. This would apply to any residence, whether or not the owners were present while guests occupied it. As Governor Cuomo has said many times, the virus does not know gender, race, age or, for that matter, whether you are an owner, renter, guest or squatter. I urge this Board to discuss this with the County Commissioner of Health before making a decision about how to proceed to protect the public health.

Sincerely,
John Fiorillo

2. Meg & Dave Everett (April 21, 2020 @ 6:19PM)

Good evening Donal,

Just wanted to convey my support for a postponement of the decision to close the town summer camp. Perhaps you can make this decision at a later date.

Many thanks,
Meg and Dave Everett
Old Chatham, NY

3. Bob Balcom (April 23, 2020 @ 10:47A)

Dear Town Board Members,

I know there is an honest attempt to try and keep your meetings casual and informal but you are the governing body for our town. The organizational meeting minutes have a basic summary of how to proceed with a meeting but generally, most governing bodies follow Robert's Rules of Order. This is done to make your meetings more efficient and understandable. If you used them in your special meeting earlier this week it would have been cleaner and Donal would not have been struggling, as were the other board members, and me as an audience member, to figure out what was going on.

But in a nutshell proceeding on an issue is quite simple. A member makes a motion (or resolution), that motion is seconded. Discussion then proceeds. You are doing that backwards. First you start with discussion without every voting to start discussion on a motion. That step is important because from that point on you deal with that motion. If the discussion leads to a possible amendment, then the member asking for the amendment then receives a vote. Once discussion ends, you vote. If a member wishes to table the motion they merely need a second and a vote occurs immediately. Then that item remains tabled until a motion is made to remove it from the table and it is second.

This also makes it much easier for the town clerk who actually does not need to take verbatim minutes but is required to record motions, amendments, and votes.

Here is a [link to a handy summary of Robert's Rules of Order](#). I was a Parliamentarian for several large meetings of organizations and following the rules can get quite complicated. But the general order of introduce a motion, second it, discuss, and vote makes it much easier on the chair, the members and the public trying to follow what is being discussed.

I think following these rules of order actually will make your meetings just as casual in your discussion but tightening up the procedure will move you into how organizations across the planet run meetings.

Good luck and stay safe.

Bob

4. Carol L. Moore (May 5, 2020 @ 10:05A)

Dear Supervisor Collins:

I viewed the YouTube live-stream of the April 21, 2020 Special Town Board meeting, and find the Board's adoption of Resolution 87-2020 (as modified) to be not only objectionable but unlawful. The sole purpose of the resolution, as stated on the record by Board member Abi Mesick (and as supported by the detailed public comment letter of Town resident and presumptive STR owner Jeanne Veillette Bowerman), is to provide STR owners with a justification for avoiding the monetary and other penalties imposed by Airbnb and similar platforms if the host's cancellation of reservations made prior to the pandemic does not meet the platform's requirements for "extenuating circumstances." While I'm sympathetic to the plights of STR hosts (and all other local businesses and enterprises) that are financially impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, I'm dismayed that the Board has singled out this group for special treatment, particularly as short-term rentals of residential properties is not currently an authorized use under the Town Zoning Code.

Clearly the resolution has nothing to do with Town governance, and comes far too late in the course of the pandemic to meaningfully address the health, safety and welfare of the public. Rather, it is clear that the enactment of the resolution was intended to enable a small number of residents to avoid their private contractual obligations, which is not a proper function of a municipal governing body. I hope that in the future the Board can realign its decision-making to focus on governance of the Town, with an eye toward the best interests of the residents as a whole and not those of a minority.

I request that this letter be read into the record and entered into the minutes of the Town Board Workshop meeting on May 7th. Thank you.

Respectfully, Carol L. Moore

5. Jeanne Veillette Bowerman (May 6, 2020 @ 3:06PM)

Dear Supervisor Collins and Town Board,

I am dismayed that I have to write a letter to the Board to clarify a previous email I sent on April 21st that's sole purpose was to clear up misinformation from the Board meeting on April 16th. The goal of my original email was simply to provide information to the Board on how Airbnbs work and what the process would be for those property owners, and taxpayers of our town, to cancel reservations in order to free up their rental properties for healthcare workers or locals in need of quarantining, as well as keep their own

families safe from COVID.

And now I am clarifying misinformation yet again, as my email was misrepresented by Councilman Wapner as self-serving.

Let me be clear, as I have stated ad nauseam in many public comments at Town Board meetings, I do not own a STR in Chatham. I will repeat this one last time: I do not own a short-term rental in Chatham, NY. I have no vested interest whatsoever in what the town does with STRs except my concern as a Chatham resident for property owners' rights and for the health and welfare of my fellow citizens. I was merely supplying information to aid the Board in their discussions. That's it. To twist my words and imply I have something personal to gain is ridiculous, not to mention it is also grossly improper to publicly speak of a citizen of this town in a format where they have no way to give an immediate response to defend and, yet again, clarify their words and misrepresentation of them.

Furthermore, this misinterpretation has now led to members of the public, as well as the Chatham Democrats committee, to further spread false information. When a Board member jumps to the wrong conclusions and speculates, it causes a dangerous domino effect in public opinion. Again, it's preposterous and using a pandemic to push a political agenda, and worse, to attempt to further divide our community. Of all times we should be united fully and working together is during a pandemic!

The sole purpose of my April 21st email was to provide information to keep our town safe from harm and to help all property owners put our community on pause. Every other member of our community, including STR owners, are worried about their economic health, not just their physical health. They also want the opportunity to use their vacant properties to help the community as a whole. Anything we, as a community, could do to help each other, regardless of the size of that segment of our citizenship, we should be doing. We should be behaving as a supportive and caring community, not as politicians.

I would think this Board would be level-headed enough to put Chatham's citizens above their own political agendas. This is not a time to fight over STRs or to point fingers and relive the past election. This is a time to lead with care. This is a time for all 5 members of our local government to work together to help us be safe as a community.

I am appalled by the continued hostility. The election is over, and I hoped the Board would put it behind them and work as a team, united in their goal to help Chatham. But apparently the overwhelming bi-partisan public support at that last election for Supervisor Collins and Councilpersons Pitkin and Mesick wasn't enough to demonstrate that that is exactly what the vast majority of our public wants as well—to move on, start fresh, and to all work together. Yes, many Democrats voted for our current leadership, too. Yet, that fact is ignored and the fights continue.

What saddens me the most is the 5 citizens at the helm of our town could do so much good together and be leading by example. You are all intelligent people, who I believe have good hearts. The success you could achieve has no bounds... except by the self-inflicted wounds you continue to rip scabs off of. This is not national politics. Chatham is a community of friends and neighbors. I implore you to work together and live up to your potential as a team. When you remove the party-line labels, you'll find you have a lot more in common than you realize.

Bottom-line, the divide needs to end. We all need to put Chatham and the safety of our citizens first and foremost, pandemic or not.

Respectfully,
Jeanne Veillette Bowerman
East Chatham, NY

6. Julia Horst (April 14, 2020 @ 10:40AM)

Hello Donal,

I'd like to introduce you to a new county wide program, called Seed to Feed, that is being started by myself and other community members. I've listed the vision and mission statements below as a quick overview of what this is about.

We will be using a small plot of land owned by Chatham Hardware to start this pilot program. We are asking for your help to promote this on a Town and County level.

In our beginning stages, signage is critical to get the word out, and with your background in this area you could be a great help.

I look forward to speaking further.

Thank you,

Julia Horst

Harvest Hall Superintendent

Vision Statement:

The **Seed to Feed** movement is designed to encourage and help people to grow vegetables at home.

Mission Statement:

The purpose of the Columbia County Community Garden is to demonstrate to the residents and families of Columbia County the value and importance of at home agriculture. Home gardens improve the quality of life with good nutrition and a healthy relationship to the land. We desire to educate all who are interested in gardening from start to finish, including picking a plot, cultivating soil, setting up fencing, guarding against pests and critters, sowing seeds, maintaining crops, harvesting, and preserving produce. We also seek to provide a forum for recipe sharing and produce preparation as well as encourage donating to and support of local food pantries and soup kitchens.

Main Sponsors: The Harvest Hall at the Columbia County Fair and Chatham Hardware.

To donate to this cause, contact harvesthallsuper@gmail.com or 518-567-4302.

7. Gail Cirone (April 26, 2020 @ 2:08PM)

Interesting...

https://youtu.be/xfLVxx_IBLU

Are we ready to move on?

Be well, and Shine your light wherever you go.

Gayla

(aka Gail)