

A year ago today, March 11, 2020, of the World Health Organization declared the Covid crisis to be a pandemic. The next night this Board met in person and appointed a three person Public Health Taskforce, Rus Davis, Janet Mackin and Dave Proper. That was the last time we met in person. On March 19 we closed the Town Hall. On March 30 we met for the first time via Zoom. At that meeting we banned all in person meetings, we approved staggered schedules for the Highway Department - and among other things, we cancelled the Easter Egg Hunt.

A year later, we are at a turning point, I hope. On the one hand, the numbers in Columbia County are going down. They have not flattened completely. There were 6 new cases today. The number of deaths keeps rising- it is now 88 . The hospitalizations and ICU rates remain quite steady. A few days ago there was a covid outbreak in the DMV and County Clerk's office. Seven of 23 staff were infected the DOH closed both offices until March 19, 2021.

We are clearly not out of the woods yet, but spring is in the air and I am getting calls about little league, and summer programs. And I feel optimistic that if we do this right, we can begin to open. We will still wear masks and keep our distance but at least we can come together for some community.

This past week I met with Bryan and Hollie Van Tassel who are the Director and Assistant Director of the Copake Summer Camp. The Van Tassels are educators at Taconic Hills and are both experienced with the protocols which can be employed to safeguard children. They think that they might need extra counselors and maybe limit the number of campers but they are thinking that a summer camp is doable. I have invited them to attend our April meeting with a detailed plan.

I have also spoken with Adam Nielson and received an email from Ron Semp, president of Taconic Hills Little League Board of Directors. They have conferred with the Columbia County DOH and will get back to us in April with a detailed plan, approved by the DOH.

I have also communicated with Liana Roberts, Chair of the Park Commission about the Summer Music Program. I am urging the Park Commission to prepare a detailed plan consistent with NYS guidance. The plan should include not only precautions for social distancing and wearing of masks but should also include how the rules will be enforced. I am suggesting that the Park Commission have a plan to put forward prior to the April meeting.

Finally, as we mark this anniversary there is some very good and exciting news for Copake. The American Rescue Plan Act which was passed yesterday and signed into law by President Biden includes significant assistance to Towns. We are informed that it includes \$370,000 for Copake and \$11.37 million for Columbia County.

This is hugely exciting news. It would appear that the funds can definitely be used to fill in the shortfall in state revenue (such as CHIPS), and to pay for the covid related equipment which we had to purchase. It may also be available for infrastructure and other benefits.

I was on a zoom call with Congressman Delgado last week and earlier today I was on a call with Senator Schumer. As we begin to understand better what these funds will mean to Copake I will be reporting back to you.

As we mark the end of a really horrible sad year, I am grateful to each of you who have supported our efforts through this journey. We will close the evening in perhaps a final moment of silence to honor those who were victims of this vicious disease, 88 of whom were our neighbors in Columbia County.