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Secretary of State Jim Condos Issues Directive Allowing Municipal Elections to Be Postponed

Montpelier, VT – Today Vermont Secretary of State Jim Condos announced a directive, issued March 31st by the Secretary in agreement with the Governor under the authority granted in Act 92, §3 (2020), allowing for the postponement of municipal elections.

“The current public health crisis has been a serious test for all of us, and it’s also testing our democracy,” said Secretary Condos. “Enabling municipalities to postpone upcoming mandated local elections to a later date is in the best interest of the public’s health, and the health of poll workers and municipal officials, during this critical stage of effort to slow community spread of the coronavirus.”

Specifically, the directive states that *“any municipality that has an upcoming annual meeting or other election that is mandated to be held on or by a certain date, either by charter, article of agreement, other governing document, or by the provisions of 17 V.S.A. §2643 or §2661, may cancel that election and hold it on a different date in the year 2020 as determined by the municipality.”*

The official directive can be found on the Secretary of State’s [website](#).

In [guidance](#) sent to Vermont’s Town and City Clerks, Elections Director Will Senning said the postponement of upcoming local elections “will give us all time to hopefully get past the height of this virus and to also assess the need for, to devise, and to implement any special procedures to conduct these votes more safely.”

“The decision to allow for the postponement of municipal elections during this active crisis is not one I take lightly,” said Secretary Condos. “However, holding fair, free and accessible elections while protecting the public’s health during these times of social distancing, may mean that as Vermonters we must be prepared for an elections process that may be different than what we’re used to.”

The decision to postpone an upcoming municipal election is a local decision and must be made by the legislative body of the municipality, which may now meet and do so remotely under temporary [revisions to the open meeting law](#).

To protect the rights of local voters, language in the directive mandates *“[a]ny such cancelled election shall be held as soon as possible when it may be safely done so as deemed by the municipality, and the rights of any petitioners shall be preserved until such time as the election is held.”*

More information on the COVID-19 response by the Secretary of State’s office, including the Elections Division, can be found on the Secretary of State’s [website](#).

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