



January 2021

WATT'S NEWS



CMELD would like to wish everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year!



THE TOWN HALL WILL BE CLOSED ON MONDAY, JANUARY 18, IN HONOR OF MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

Please keep in mind:

- When paying your CMELD and Water Bills it is important to enclose the "return portion" of your bill with payment in order to identify the proper account.
- When using online bill pay, personal check or money order, please indicate your entire customer number.
- If you are paying 2 or more bills with one check, indicate account numbers separately and the amount to be applied to each.
- Remember, if paying both electric and water bills at the same time they must be separate payments. Water payments should be made to Chester Water Department.

WATER METER and PIPE FREEZE UPS

With the extremely low temperatures, residents could experience water meter freeze ups. This could result in broken pipes and water running into basements. We cannot stress enough the importance of keeping the area where your water meter is located above freezing. If your basement is unheated, not only is the water meter in danger of freezing, but your water pipes beyond the meter can also freeze resulting in flooding and potentially expensive repairs. There are insulated and/or electrical wraps that can be used as well as heaters or lights on timers. Also, please keep your faucet open just a little; running with just a trickle of water. This will help to avoid any pipes freezing.

Just a couple reminders from CMELD:

- ◆ Payments must be received on or before the discount due date in order to be eligible for the discount.
- ◆ Paperless billing is now available-contact the office to learn more.
- ◆ Payments received during the last week of the month may not be reflected on your new bill.
- ◆ Payments can be dropped 24/7 in the black lock box on the Town Hall steps.
- ◆ CMELD will work with customers to develop budget or payment plans.
- ◆ Past due and shut off notices are based on the number of days of non-payment, not account balance.
- ◆ Springfield Partners for Community Action can help fuel assistance eligible customers with weatherization evaluations and upgrades.
- ◆ Energy New England provides residential home energy assessments for CMELD consumers, services are paid for by Chester Municipal Electric.

Happy New Year from the Town Clerk's office!

First all I would like to thank all the workers and everyone that voted on November 3rd. Chester had around 83% of all registered voters to vote either by mail, take advantage of early voting or vote in person on November 3rd. Wouldn't it be nice if we had a large turnout for our town election in May? You should have at this time received your "Chester Annual Street Census" in the mail. Please check to make sure all information is correct **sign and date** the paper and return to the town clerk. Just put it in the envelope it came in and put in the LARGE black box on the steps of the town hall. They need to be returned by Feb 1. If not you will be getting another one in the mail. This ties into the election process. If you have moved, changed your name, added members to your family please make sure I get all the correct information. Several people had problems on election day because they had moved and had not notify the clerk's office. The state does a cleanup on their data base and they don't know if you moved within town they just see you haven't sent back your census form. If you didn't get a street census by January 10th please call 354-6603 and I will mail you one. If you are new to town please drop your address in the LARGE black box and I will see that you get a blank one to fill out and send back. I believe the dog license application is self explanatory. If you have any questions don't hesitate to call and please repeat your telephone number twice on the message.



Help for Hilltowners: Hilltown Food Bucks stretch your food dollars at local markets:

Hilltown CDC has partnered with local retailers to create the **Hilltown Food Bucks**, a local effort to help Hilltown residents stretch their food dollars while supporting our critical local food businesses in a difficult time of social and economic stress. Eligible participants can receive between \$100-\$125 food coupons per month for five months to be used at participating local stores and farms. The coupons double your spending power when you make a purchase, as you can use the Hilltown Food Bucks to pay for up to half of your food purchase. Residents of the following Southern Hilltowns are eligible to apply: Blandford, Chester, Huntington, Middlefield, and Montgomery. Program funding is limited, and is on a first come, first serve basis. Interested parties can fill out the one page application at <https://www.hilltowncdc.org/news/2020/9/25/hilltown-food-bucks> or call Kate Bavelock, Director of Community Programs, at kateb@hilltowncdc.org or 413-296-4536 x 116. Food Bucks can be redeemed at the following Southern Hilltowns markets: Chester Village Market, Moltenbrays in Huntington, Cream of the Crop Farm in Russell, and The Blandford Country Store.





To the Citizens of Chester,

We, your Board of Selectmen, want to thank you for your diligence over the past many months since we entered the world of COVID-19. The number of cases in our town has been low and we credit each of you with doing your part to follow the prevention protocols.

Life changed for all of us this past year, both as individuals and as a community. It goes against our nature not to spend time with friends and family any time we want; or not to shake hands; or not to hug those we care about. It has been, and continues to be, a foreign, scary, and depressing time.

It was also strange to not have our usual annual community events including Chester on Track and the Memorial Day commemoration and parade. But in true Chester-style, we carried on, went virtual, and got creative in bringing joy to each other. The Board of Selectmen, in conjunction with guidance from the Board of Health, gave the go-ahead for “Trick or Treating” and the annual Tree Lighting, urging everyone to follow safety protocols but giving citizens the choice to make their own decisions. These small bits of normalcy helped to brighten spirits and we are grateful to all who made those events happen.

From individuals to town organizations, small-town volunteerism has been in full force throughout the pandemic. Neighbors have reached out to neighbors, whether making sure they have food and other supplies they need, or simply checking in to make sure they are okay. There has been such a spirit of giving in Chester, and it is one of the things that makes our town special; Chester has always had that spirit, and it is particularly inspiring to see it in force during this difficult time.

In addition to looking out for each in our town, we want you all to know, you can count on your Selectboard to be there for you as well. In fact, all Town staff are dedicated to keeping our town running, solving problems, and addressing issues – small and large. Please contact Town Hall at 354-7760, or the Selectmen individually. We will do our best to help.

We are not completely through the tunnel yet, but we CAN see the light. We cannot predict what 2021 will bring, but we can hope, and if need be, we will adapt and carry on. We have already proven that we can.

We remain, Chester Strong.

Power Outages & Downed Power Lines
Call 413-447-0268



First step: Report the outage

When your lights go out, let us know as soon as possible. When you speak to a representative, it's helpful if you can provide any of the following information: Are your lights dim or out? Did you check your fuse or breaker box for blown fuses or tripped circuits? Are your neighbors' lights out? Is a power line down? Did a tree limb fall on a power line? Is there any damage to the utility pole? Are the streetlights out? Did you hear a noise?

Next steps for your home

Turn off all electrical equipment, including your water heater, electric furnace or heaters, stove, washer and dryer, stereo and TV, to help prevent overloading the system when power is restored. (Major appliances can be turned off at the breaker box.) Do however, turn on a porch light and one inside light so you and CMELD's crew will know when service is restored.

If you see any downed utility line, stay far back and call CMELD: 413-447-0268. Keep children and pets away, too. A downed line doesn't have to spark to be dangerous. And a wire can be dangerous even if you're not touching it; water, metal, tree branches, concrete or other materials touching the wire can conduct electricity from a wire to you.

If your neighbor's power comes back on but yours does not, call CMELD again.

New Year, New Career!

Considering entering the Health Care field? The Southern Hilltowns Adult Education Center is offering support for Southern Hilltown Residents to enter into the Health care field through a partnership with Holyoke Community College and local Health care businesses. Thanks to a partnership created through the CARES Grant, residents for the towns of Blandford, Chester, Huntington, Middlefield and Montgomery can attend Holyoke Community College's Community Health Worker training program free of charge, receiving 9 college credits through the online program. Residents are also eligible to receive technical support from SHAEC, as well as assistance in qualifying for the program. Additionally, SHAEC can help refer you to local businesses that offer paid on-the-job training for Certified Nurse's Aide, Home Health Aide, and Homemaker/ Companion positions. Interested parties should register online at <https://shaec.org/registration-form/> with either “Community Health Worker” or “Health care On the Job Training” in the class line. Questions about the program should be sent to SHAEC program Director Michele Kenney at Southern-hilltownsaec@gmail.com or leave a message at 413-354-1055. SHAEC also now offers fully remote self-paced GED / HiSet classes, giving students the opportunity to create their own schedule in order to obtain their High School equivalency diploma. The program is paid for by the CARES grant, for residents of the Gateway Regional School district. Please register online at <https://shaec.org/registration-form/> with GED/ HiSet in the Class line. Other classes offered through SHAEC can be seen on their website: www.SHAEC.org