

Opening Town Clerk Offices
VLCT Testimony
April 23, 2020
Senate Government Operations

We understand that ability to access land records to make property transactions or re-financings possible is tremendously important for the property taxpayers who need to complete those transactions. How to accomplish that while keeping people safe is a tricky proposition.

Secretary Lindsey Kurrle, Secretary of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development issued guidance on Addendum 10 to Executive Order 01-20 on both April 17 and April 20. She stated, “as we move forward, businesses and employees must understand that *how* they work is essential to resuming and maintaining business operations”.

April 17:

- Employees shall not report to, or be allowed to remain at, work or job site if sick or symptomatic.
- All employees must observe strict social distancing of 6 feet while on the job
- Employees must wear non-medical cloth face coverings when in the presence of others.
- Employees must have easy and frequent access to soap and water or hand sanitizer during duration of work and hand washing or sanitization should be required before entering, and leaving job sites. All common spaces must be cleaned and disinfected at the beginning, middle and end of each shift and prior to transfer from one person to another.
- No more than two people shall occupy one vehicle when conducting work.

April 20:

“1.3 Low or no contact professional services

- “Services operating with a single worker (such as appraisers, realtors, municipal clerks, attorneys, property managers, pet care operators, and others) *may* operate if they can comply with the mandatory health and safety requirements listed above, with no more than 2 persons (service provider and client) present at one time.”
- <https://accd.vermont.gov/news/update-new-work-safe-additions-stay-home-stay-safe-order>
- We have a wide variation of space configurations in town clerk offices as well as a wide variation in the capacity of clerks or their staff, should they have staff, to make their office environments safe for both themselves and any public who are allowed in. As well, in some cities and towns the land records are on-line and may be accessed without ever entering the municipal building. In others, land records are digitized and may be accessed via computer in the

municipal building. And in yet others, land records remain accessible on paper – listers’ cards or land record books. ***Each local legislative body or clerk must make the determination about what constitutes safe access to the municipal building.***

- The Secretary of State regularly updates its list of Municipal Clerk office closures, most recently this Monday.
- Efforts to make it possible for the public to access the land records that we have heard, include:
 - Opening the office by appointment and restricting the number of people in the building at one time.
 - Sending information to attorneys via email upon request.
 - Only the clerk or staff entering the vault.
 - Setting aside paper land record books or lister cards for a period of time before any other person may use them.
 - Requiring the public to wear face masks and or wash hands before entering the municipal building.
 - Installing clear shields between members of the public and employees as many grocery stores and post offices are doing.