

## **Statement of the Town of Washington, NY Regarding Data Security Incident**

The Town of Washington is in the process of responding to a data security incident that resulted from the targeting of our information technology system by an unauthorized, unknown third party. We have been treating this issue with the highest priority, are nearing the final stages of resolution, and are committed to ongoing action to protect our data.

On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, we discovered suspicious activity in our IT system and immediately disconnected our servers and initiated an internal investigation. Within 24 hours, we brought in outside data security consultants, who were able to confirm that malicious software had been used to compromise our system and encrypt numerous data files. On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, we notified law enforcement of the incident and will continue to share information with them. We also notified our insurance carrier, which is providing assistance.

Although no specific monetary demands were made, the hackers included a message asking us to contact them to restore access to our encrypted files. The Town Board met and quickly decided that we would not engage with the perpetrators to reward their criminal activity. Instead, we initiated our own process utilizing outside experts to resolve the incident, restore our data from backups, and bolster our data security. This process included engaging an independent computer forensics company to conduct a thorough investigation to understand what happened and what information may have been impacted.

The forensics investigation is nearly complete, and we are pleased that at this time there is no evidence that any sensitive personal information has been accessed or misused as a result of this incident. Our experts were able to confirm that an unauthorized party operating from an IP address in Belgium executed malicious software in our system on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, and that the software included features to encrypt files, disable security firewalls and complicate tracking and forensics. They also found no indication that any files were exfiltrated or any information was removed from our system.

At this point, our email and computer systems are back up and running securely to allow us a near full return to business as usual. We are in the process of working to restore the data captured through our most recent backup, which was on July 1<sup>st</sup>, and we plan to manually rebuild those records that we are unable to restore.

In addition to system repair and data restoration, we currently have IT consultants reviewing our system security for potential enhancements. We sincerely regret this incident and appreciate the extensive efforts of all those supporting our response. We will remain vigilant in our commitment to protect the Town's data and systems.

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