Coronavirus (COVID-19) Situation Awareness Report
3:00 pm, March 13, 2020

In the face of an extreme risk of COVID-19 person-to-person transmission, I have declared a State of Emergency in the City of Easthampton effectively immediately and until further notice.

As a result of this declaration, Easthampton City Hall, the Council of Aging, our Public Schools are closed to the public beginning Monday, March 16, 2020.

These actions are a part of a city-wide risk mitigation strategy to reduce the heightened regional risk of cross-contamination. We are working closely with surrounding communities to reduce the spread of the virus further.

My office will send out a daily Coronavirus (COVID-19) Situation Awareness Report at 3:00 pm for the duration of the State of Emergency. The report will be released over Facebook, on easthamptonma.gov, and Easthampton Media.

When a new illness is circulating, it is natural for people to ask what they can do to protect themselves and their families. For our community health actions to be effective, we need all community members to do their part by staying at home as much as possible during the school closure. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health advises:

- Practice social isolation—only leaving home as necessary
- Avoid large social gatherings
- Cover coughs/sneezes with tissues, or cough/sneeze into the inner elbow
- Practice good handwashing with soap and water as often as possible
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers ONLY if soap and water are not available

City departments will be sending out separate documents with resources and direction that related to their department. The Situational Awareness Reports are overviews of each day with crucial information from departments that relate to core municipal services.
**Easthampton City Hall Operations**

For municipal government continuity, core City operations and services will continue while City Hall will be closed to the public. City departments can be contacted via phone and email but their primary focus is COVID-19 related issues. The following essential personnel may be called to work or asked to work remotely during the closure: clerks, technology, finance, collections, payroll, public safety, school department staff and department heads.

**City Employee Information**

Information for City personnel will be forthcoming from City administrators via email.

**City Building Closures**

The City has determined that all rental use of City facilities, public-at-large use of the facilities, evening and community events in our facilities have been canceled, effective immediately and until further notice. In addition, the following guidance is being issued for the following:

All essential services will be closed at night and on weekends for the foreseeable future, with updated information to be provided on the City website.

**City Council**

Governor Baker issued an Executive Order regarding Open Meeting Law and COVID-19. Per his order, the City Council President is working to enable remote participation by Council, Committee and Board members for meetings essential to the operation of City business.

**Public Safety**

The Public Safety Complex lobby at 32 Payson Avenue will be an accessible area to the public. However, the public will not have access to community meeting rooms. Drug drop off, and firearms licensing processing are suspended until further notice. Public contact with Dispatch will be via the lobby phone. Additionally, the sharps dispensary container was relocated to the lobby.

**Easthampton Public Schools**

According to Monica Bharel, Commissioner of the MA Department of Health, we are at "a critical point in the outbreak in Massachusetts of COVID-19". In order to allow for adequate social distancing to help protect vulnerable populations, we have made the decision to close all Easthampton Schools for a minimum of two weeks beginning Monday, March 16, 2020. This means schools will be closed with a tentative return date of Monday, March 30, 2020. That date will be reassessed throughout the two-week closure period based on the evolving COVID-19 situation across the state.

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We know that there are a tremendous number of questions that will arise from this decision. We will follow-up in the coming days with a Frequently Asked Questions document related to the upcoming closure.

**Out of district special education students:** If you're out of district school is open, school will be in session for you as scheduled if you choose to attend. Transportation will be your responsibility. Please look for notices from your specific school for up to date information.

Please know that we have provided guidance below for residents, families and students, and staff to help in practicing social isolation, monitoring symptoms, and avoiding typical student events and large gatherings during this possible two-week period. The intent is to isolate and therein calm the spread of the virus. If you do not assist us in this manner, we may be staying out of school for no effective result. This is City-wide public health strategy to reduce community illness, please take our requests seriously.

**Food Support for Students:** We have worked with food services to develop breakfast and lunch brown bag options. We have prioritized the Maple Elementary School due to its status as a Community Eligibility Program. They will be able to pick up breakfast and lunch between 8:30 am and 10 am at Easthampton High School beginning on Monday. Maple families have been notified. On Monday we will finalize a plan for the remaining schools and communicate that plan to families.

In the interest of ensuring equity of access, we are not allowed to provide any digital or remote learning opportunities to replace in-person teaching during this closure, per the MA Commissioner of Education.

**Previously Scheduled Activities:** While we know it is disappointing that activities are not occurring; we hope you bear with us while we prioritize community health. We are working to reschedule things wherever possible in the coming weeks. We understand that there will be questions about AP classes, college application deadlines, prom and other special events but we cannot yet answer this at this time.

The MIAA (Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association) has moved spring sports start to the earliest March 30, 2020.

**School Employee Information**

It is expected that all staff will check work email during this closure to remain informed. More information will be distributed directly to staff.

During this closure, schools will be cleaned and disinfected using deeper disinfection equipment. Custodial staff will be asked to report to the schools to handle these activities.

A status update will be distributed to families on Friday.
Please know that we have provided guidance below for residents, families and students, and staff to help in practicing social isolating, monitoring symptoms, and avoiding typical student events and large gatherings during this possible two-week period. The intent is to isolate and therein calm the spread of the virus. If you do not assist us in this manner, we may be staying out of school for no effective result. This is City-wide public health strategy to reduce community illness, and please take our requests seriously.

**Council on Aging and Enrichment (COA)**

The COA is suspending all on-site programs and services until further notice. The COA serves residents who are most at risk of contracting the virus. The closing of the building is a proactive step to protect the patrons of the COA. The staff of the COA is working and available during regular business hours to provide alternative arrangements for seniors who need access to essential services. For questions, call 413-527-6151.

**Keep Informed**

Please access these reliable sources of information for the coronavirus (COVID-19) throughout the State of Emergency:

- [www.mass.gov/coronavirus](http://www.mass.gov/coronavirus)
- [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- [www.epsd.us](http://www.epsd.us)
- [www.facebook.com/easthampton413](http://www.facebook.com/easthampton413)
- [https://www.facebook.com/easthamptonfire/](https://www.facebook.com/easthamptonfire/)
- [https://www.facebook.com/EasthamptonPD/](https://www.facebook.com/EasthamptonPD/)
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