We have all watched the unsettling advance of the coronavirus (COVID-19) across the world, country and Massachusetts. To stay prepared in the face of such advances, I have been meeting with the leaders of our city departments to ensure the safety of our residents and the continuity of core municipal operations. We are working actively with Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Earlier this week, I outlined the MA DPH recommended steps to protect and mitigate the spread of the virus as well as preparations to respond to COVID-19 effects on Easthampton. I urge all members of the public to review these steps and continue to follow them. Both the steps and a direct link to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health at www.easthamptonma.gov – please check the website regularly for local and state COVID-19 updated information. Additionally, I am starting with short video segments, airing on Easthampton Media, beginning today. We will be using CODE RED for the most urgent information. Please sign up for this service at https://public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/BF8B49577EBA.

As community education continues, you have seen public and private events cancelled or postponed to slow the spread of the virus. The City strongly encourages businesses and groups sponsoring large events or meetings revisit the necessity of these gatherings. The City recommends all non-essential gatherings are cancelled until further notice.

Our primary focuses are 1) mitigate current spread of the virus 2) maintain core municipal services 3) continuity of City government. I am committed with the City’s Leadership Team to ensure that Easthampton’s government and core services do not fail its residents.

On March 10, 2020, the Baker/Polito Administration issued a State of Emergency in preparation to respond to COVID-19 that included new guidance for Executive Branch employees in order to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. In conjunction with the Board of Health, I am extending this guidance to include all city personnel as described below:

- Regular internal business shall continue, including but not limited to mandated public hearings and board meetings.
- All work-related travel, both foreign and domestic, is to be discontinued until further notice.
• Conferences, seminars and other discretionary gatherings, scheduled and hosted by or involving external parties, are to be held virtually or cancelled until further notice.
• City employees should not attend external work-related conferences, seminars or events but are encouraged to participate remotely.
• City employees feeling sick with fever or flu symptoms should not come into work. Contact Personnel with questions or concerns related to sick leave. We are committed to supporting our municipal public servants to the fullest extent possible.
• Department leaders will review possible remote work options with employees to minimize virus spread while keeping core services available to the public.

City employees are being re-trained in cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing common public and work areas. These actions complement additional precautions that have been undertaken in recent days, including: encouraging proper self-care and hygiene such as washing hands; ensuring bathrooms are stocked with hand washing materials and paper products; frequently cleaning touch points such as doorknobs, handles, elevator buttons and common area surface; and making cleaning products and sanitizers available in all public workspaces.

With all of these preventative efforts, I want to be clear that further precautions are very likely to be put into place with the sole goals of public safety and continuity of government. As this is a very fluid situation and constantly changing, please watch the Massachusetts’ Department of Public Health website (https://search.mass.gov/?q=covid-19), City of Easthampton’s website (www.easthamptonma.gov) and social media channels (www.facebook.com/easthampton413) for updates as we all work to turn the tide of this virus.

Date Signature
Mayor Nicole LaChapelle
City of Easthampton