CITY OF EASTHAMPTON • MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
Nicole LaChapelle

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Situation Awareness Report
Saturday and Sunday, March 21 - 22, 2020

TWO IMPORTANT FACTS: 1) THERE IS NO VACCINE OR TREATMENT FOR COVID-19 VIRUS. 2) ANTIBIOTICS TREAT BACTERIAL INFECTIONS NOT VIRUSES.

The national, state and city Declaration of Emergency to lessen the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic remains in effect and will until further notice.

Faith based organizations and services are covered by Governor’s Executive Order banning over 25 people to gather (the City strongly recommends no more than 10 people should gather)

EVERYONE practicing SOCIAL DISTANCING flattens the dramatic upward curve of COVID-19.

UPDATES:

- Beginning Monday, March 23rd, Easthampton School Department’s breakfast and lunch program includes anyone between the ages of 0 to 18 years, as well as Southampton youth needing bagged meals

- The March 31st Special Election for the 2nd Hampden Hampshire Special Election has been postponed
• Open businesses must have mandatory signage up per Easthampton Board of Health

• Starting Monday, March 23rd, the Board of Health will begin fining businesses who are not complying with signage, crowd size and social distancing protocols as well as all other orders
  o Fines begin at $50.00 and can go up to $300.00

• Day cares are closed effective Monday, March 23, 2020 at least through April 6, 2020 per Governor Baker’s Executive Order.
  o For 1st Responders and essential employees, the state has set up Exempt Emergency Child Care programs. Details can be found here: https://eeclead.force.com/apex/EEC_ChildCareEmergencyProcedure

• Attorney General Maura Healey has set up hotlines:
  o General resources: https://www.mass.gov/guides/resources-during-covid-19
  o Fraud: https://www.mass.gov/guides/resources-during-covid-19#-protect-yourself-from-scams-and-fraud-

• Call 211 to help get answers and resources. Or chat with a 211 operator at http://www.mass211.org/

• REMINDER: Due to the inability to maintain the minimum social distancing of 6 feet, the Board of Health is requiring hair salons, esthetic (skin care) salons, spas, nail salons, barber shops, and body art establishments to suspend operations effective Monday, March 23, 2020 through Sunday, April 5, 2020. This order will be re-evaluated in two weeks and may be extended.

ECONOMIC RELIEF:

• The IRS pushed the April 15th federal tax filing date has been pushed to July 15, 2020.

• Small business and student loan resources can be found at: https://www.mass.gov/guides/resources-during-covid-19#-small-businesses-

• The MA Department of Public Utilities has restricted all electric and gas companies from shutting off service – is applies to ALL RESIDENTIAL account regardless of income.

• MA Housing Court has issued a Standing Order to halt evictions of tenants. Call 413-748-7838 or www.masscourts.org for more information.
• The Department of Housing suspended FHA evictions and foreclosures. Details: https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/HUD_No_20_042

• If you need help with mortgage payments, check with your bank or mortgage company to see what relief programs they may have – many do.

• **DO NOT WAIT TO APPLY FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS.** Apply now if your income has dropped or you are without employment or self-employed – the definition of who qualifies has been expanded. https://www.mass.gov/alerts/important-unemployment-information#undefined

Below is vital information by the city function. **For full updates, please visit the list of resources at the very bottom of this report:**

**Easthampton Municipal Government**

For continuity, core City operations and services are in place through this Declaration of Emergency. City employees are checking emails and voicemails as frequently as possible. The majority of City employees are working remotely or on a limited schedule. During the Declaration of Emergency, emails and calls directly related to COVID-19 are answered first. Direct urgent inquiries to mayor@easthamptonma.gov or 413-529-1400 ext 143.

**All non-essential committee meetings are postponed through April 7, 2020.** There is important work happening within City boards and committees all the time. We understand that this may be inconvenient for some, or potentially slow projects and discussions temporarily. However, it is being done under evolving recommendations and with the City's best interests in mind.

Employees and veterans **who do not have direct deposit** can pick there check up at Dispatch at 32 Payson Avenue.

**Easthampton Public Buildings**

Only essential or on-call staff have access to public buildings until further notice. Essential staff conducts municipal government functions that are only and regularly possible on-site. On-call staff intermittently access public buildings to conduct the municipal government functions of their job not possible remotely.

This restriction is to curb infection for all staff, the public, and our essential/on-call employees. Exceptions to this mandate are police and fire, DPW water/sewer, highway, and wastewater crews with staggered staffing patterns and outdoor work in the park and recreation department. Other than these exceptions, no employee is allowed to access public buildings without the Board of Heath and Mayor's approval.

All public buildings are closed to the general public – this includes schools, the Council on Aging and parks. Only the Public Safety Complex lobby at 32 Payson Avenue is an accessible area to the public. Public contact
with Dispatch will be via the lobby phone. Drug drop off, and firearms licensing processing are suspended until further notice. Additionally, the sharps dispensary container is in the lobby.

**Mayor's Office**

Both email (mayor@easthamptonma.gov) and voice mail (413-529-1400, ext.146) are being monitored with COVID-19 urgent matters prioritized. Press inquiries should also be sent to the Mayor's Office.

The Mayor's office will send out a regular Coronavirus (COVID-19) Situation Awareness Report for the duration of the City's Declaration of Emergency. The report will be released over verified City Facebook pages, the City's website www.easthamptonma.gov.

Email mayor@easthamptonma.gov with offers of help in the form of goods or volunteer hours. as we are community resources for small businesses, food, and housing-related payments. We are gathering this information to match what is needed and where and the length of assistance. We do not want to overwhelm agencies providing services with help that does not match their needs.

Also, high-risk groups like seniors and those with underlying health conditions are being given priority. It is not every volunteer who can serve high-risk residents. Most importantly, the need for volunteers will not diminish in a week or even a month that said we must set up supply chains to meet long term deficits in our community.

**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.

Wednesday, March 18th, the City Council held the first virtual meeting in Easthampton’s history. The agenda was limited to items that had to be moved forward or formally extended by Council. The Council President is working with the City’s Technology Department to implement a virtual system that allows for public input.

**Audit**

The Auditor and Assistant Auditor are maintaining all financial functions remotely. Additionally, they are creating accounts to track and receive emergency funds so the City can submit for COVID19 resources as soon as possible.

**Building Inspection**

Subject to change, all inspections will be suspended except for time-sensitive inspections. For smaller projects, pictures will be accepted for inspections per the State Building Department. For large projects, structural inspections are still happening. Please call the Building Inspection Department at 413-529-1400, ext. 128 with any questions about inspections.
Collections and Assessors

From March 13 through April 30, 2020, late fees and processing of property related warrants are suspended. The Drop Box is still available to the public. It will be emptied daily, but the City cannot guarantee that the Drop Box or any outside surface of public buildings are disinfected.

Real Estate Taxes and Personal Property bills can be paid online at: https://unipaygold.unibank.com/customerinfo.aspx

Department of Public Works

Essential services – provision of water, sewer, and wastewater – continue to operate on standard protocols. Staffing has been split into smaller working groups, practicing social distancing. If a non-life threatening DPW emergency occurs outside business hours, please call the non-emergency Dispatch number (413-527-1212) to report the issue.

Dispatch

Dispatch is operating with new protocols for 911 calls. Callers will be ask about possible COVID 19 exposure and symptoms. These protocols are to lessen the spread of infection and ensure first responders know how to treat patients.

Fire Department

The Department is preparing for increased COVID-19 related calls and has implemented proactively new safety protocols.

The Easthampton Fire Department is still conducting Smoke Detector and Carbon Monoxide Detector inspections for home sales as of today. To schedule an inspection, please email the Fire Department Administrative Assistant at brouthier@easthamptonma.gov Please allow for flexibility in scheduling in light of current events. Include the property address, date of closing, and the best number to reach you. You will receive an email as soon as possible with at least 2 available inspection times

If you are seeking a burning permit, come into the Public Safety Complex lobby to obtain one. At this time, we are not collecting the five-dollar fee. If you have a seasonal burning permit, call the Fire Department to see if the state is allowing burning on that day.

Health Department

Starting Monday, March 23rd, the Board of Health will begin fining businesses who are not complying with signage, crowd size and social distancing protocols as well as all other orders. Fines begin at $50.00 and can go up to $300.00.
Due to the inability to maintain the minimum social distancing of 6 feet, the Board of Health is requiring hair salons, esthetic (skin care) salons, spas, nail salons, barber shops, and body art establishments to suspend operations effective Monday, March 23, 2020 through Sunday, April 5, 2020. This order will be re-evaluated in two weeks and may be extended.

Per Governor Baker's Executive Order, gatherings of 25 or more persons in a single room or venue at one time are prohibited. This order includes but is not limited to community, civic, public, leisure, faith-based events, sporting events with spectators, concerts, fundraisers, parades, fairs, etc. The Easthampton Board of Health strongly recommends no more than 10 people attend gatherings in a single room, venue, or outdoor area at one time. For details on gatherings, go to [https://easthamptonma.gov/health-department.html](https://easthamptonma.gov/health-department.html)

The Health Agent is available by via [beichstaedt@easthamptonma.gov](mailto:beichstaedt@easthamptonma.gov). Inspections at this time are suspended until further notice. All scheduled inspections are in the process of being rescheduled to a later date to be determined by our alternate inspector.

Food Establishments, bars, convenience stores, etc. should email the Health Agent and ask to be added to the email list if they have not been receiving our emails. Information including sample signage that food establishments can use can be found on our website at [https://easthamptonma.gov/health-department.html](https://easthamptonma.gov/health-department.html). Updates can also be found on our Facebook at [https://www.facebook.com/EasthamptonHealth](https://www.facebook.com/EasthamptonHealth)

**Parks and Recreation**

The gates to Nonotuck Park will remain closed to lessen the chance of large group events. It is STRONGLY recommended that basketball games are not played on the public courts and the playground not be used until further notice.

While closed to vehicular traffic, pedestrian and bicycle traffic is permitted during daylight hours.

The Parks and Recreation staff are working on the fields so they are ready for youth leagues can start up as once the Declaration of Emergency is over.

**Payroll**

City employees are asked to check their work email for further information about payroll and benefits. If you cannot access your email remotely, please call Treasurer Jen Gallant or Personnel Director Bob Dickson at 413-529-1400.

**Police Department**

Effective 12:00 AM, Tuesday, March 17, 2020, all on-premise consumption licensees are prohibited from selling alcohol to the public until 11:59 PM on April 5, 2020. This order includes restaurants, bars, hotels, general on-premise, clubs, war veterans' clubs, continuing care retirement communities, pub-brewers, farmer – series pouring permits, and manufacturing pouring permits. These establishments are also prohibited from serving any food or drinks for on-premise consumption; only takeout and delivery of food are permitted.
The current inventory of firearms licenses will be mailed via the US Mail. New applications are not being processed at this time.

**Private Schools**

All private elementary and secondary schools are shut down per the Governor's Executive Order at least through April 6, 2020.

**Public Schools**

The Tuesday, March 24th, School Committee meeting has been cancelled per the Mayor’s Order. The school budget hearing will be rescheduled for the earliest possible date.

Please email or call. Do not come to the Easthampton Public School's central office or individual school buildings. School staff will be checking emails and voice mails remotely.

**EXPANDED** meals for students: **beginning Friday, March 19, 2020**, from 8:30 am to 11:00 am, Monday – Friday anyone between the ages of 0 to 18 years can pick up bagged breakfast and lunch at Easthampton High School. Subscribe to School Messager to get detailed updates and plans for our students, families, and staff.

**Treasurer**

Payroll services have been set up for remote processing. Bank accounts and essential financial services continue on a regular schedule. As to date, no financial transactions have been deferred given the financial markets and emergency banking protocols. Checks will be processed normally. However, if a Veteran or employee does NOT have a direct deposit, their check will be available at the Public Safety Complex in Dispatch. All other checks will be mailed via USPS.

**Veteran Services**

Veterans who do not have direct deposit can pick up their checks at Dispatch at 32 Payson Ave. All veteran services are available via email (mayor@easthamptonma.gov) or phone (413-529-1400, ext 143)

**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 staff of the COA is working and available during regular business hours to provide alternative arrangements for seniors who need access to essential services. The COA is doing wellness calls to seniors, providing transportation and is working on a protocol for volunteers. For questions, call 413-527-6151.
Keep Informed through RELIABLE Sources

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

- www.cdc.gov
- www.who.int
- www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus
- www.Easthamptonma.gov
- https://easthamptonma.gov/health-department.html
- www.epsd.us
- www.facebook.com/easthampton413
- https://www.facebook.com/easthamptonfire/
- https://www.facebook.com/EasthamptonPD/
- https://www.facebook.com/EasthamptonHealth/