FACT OF THE DAY: COLD WEATHER AND SNOW CANNOT KILL THE CORONAVIRUS

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

The Baker/Polito Administration issued new Executive Orders to combat the growing COVID-19 infection rate in Massachusetts. In summary, the emergency order requires all businesses and organizations that do not provide “COVID-19 Essential Services” to close their physical workplaces and facilities to workers, customers and the public as of Tuesday, March 24th at noon until Tuesday, April 7th at noon. These businesses are encouraged to continue operations remotely. The Emergency Order and guidance documents are attached to this report.

UPDATES:

- All City Departments are reviewing the newest Executive Orders and then updating their department procedures and protocols as needed by Wednesday, March 27th.

- 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.
  - Meals are available between 9 am – 11 am on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. On each distribution day, families will receive 2 days’ worth of food and on Fridays, they will receive meals for Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

- The March 31st Special Election for the 2nd Hampden Hampshire Special Election has been postponed to May 19, 2020.

- At their discretion, the Board of Health may exercise their authority to fining businesses and individuals 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** after a warning has been given to them by the Board of Health.

- Day cares are closed effective Monday, March 23, 2020 at least through April 6, 2020 per Governor Baker’s Executive Order.
  - 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](https://eeclead.force.com/apex/EEC_ChildCareEmergencyProcedure)

- **Attorney General Maura Healey has set up hotlines:**
  - General resources: [https://www.mass.gov/guides/resources-during-covid-19](https://www.mass.gov/guides/resources-during-covid-19)

- **Call 211 to help get answers and resources. Or chat with a 211 operator at [http://www.mass211.org/](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-](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](http://www.masscourts.org) for more information.

• 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](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 their 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**

EASTHAMPTON CITY HALL • 50 PAYSON AVE. • EASTHAMPTON • MASSACHUSETTS • 01027
413-529-1400 • easthamptonma.gov
Late this afternoon, the Mayor has asked all Department Leaders to prepare plans by Wednesday, April 1st:

1. Re-assess essential functions and staff needed for an extended period from now until April 6th
2. Create a plan to run their departments and prepare FY21 budgets with hypothetical assumption the Declaration of Emergency continues through May 6th, 2020

During uncertain times, planning allows us some surety and awareness of what resources we have and what we may need to react to a very fluid state of affairs.

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. The Mayor’s office is trying to connect offers with 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.

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

Interim requirements for construction are included here and further measures should be expected. As of now, construction in Easthampton must adhere to updated public health and social distancing guidelines in order to continue.

OSHA has categorized construction as a Low-Risk occupation, the lowest of their four categories. For example, utility work typically isolates equipment operators, truck drivers, and laborers, all of whom work outdoors at significant distances. However, not all activities are as inherently safe.

Consequently, the City is requiring all contractors to submit a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) and Site-Specific Safety Plan (SSSP) for continued operations during the emergency declaration. For private building
construction, the Inspectional Services Department is reviewing those plans and requiring additional measures as appropriate. For City contractors and utilities, the Infrastructure & Asset Management Department is restricting specific activities and has developed COVID-19 protection plans. For example, utilities will be allowed to work within the public roadway but will not be allowed to complete service connections that require property entry until after the crisis is over.

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.

City Clerk

The March 31, 2020 Special Election for the 2nd Hampden Hampshire Senate District has been postponed to May 19, 2020.

Dog licenses cannot be picked up but are being mailed out.

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.

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 asking 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

Effective immediately the Easthampton Fire Department is suspending Smoke & Carbon Monoxide detector inspections in compliance with Governor Baker’s Executive Order. This is in effect until 90 days after the State of Emergency is lifted.

The following conditions must be met in order for the inspection to be delayed:

- The buyer and seller agree, in writing, that the buyer not the seller shall be responsible to equip the property with compliant Smoke & Carbon Monoxide detectors and;
- The buyer agrees to equip the property in accordance with 527 CMR 1.00, Chapter 13
- A copy of the agreement shall be provided to the Fire Chief prior to the scheduled closing date.

For further information please contact Deputy Chief Wayne Hennemann @ 413-527-4200 ext. 2140

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.

Per Governor Baker's March 23, 2020 Executive Order, gatherings of 10 or more persons in a single room or venue at one time are prohibited. Gatherings of 10 are permitted ONLY if each and every person can maintain six (6) feet of space between them.

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.

The Health Agent is available by via at 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
Updates can also be found on our Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/EasthamptonHealth

Parks and Recreation

The gates to Nonotuck Park will remain closed to lessen the chance of large group events. Any sport activity of more than 10 or requires contact less than 6’ is prohibited. All city playgrounds are closed until further notice.

While closed to vehicular traffic, pedestrian and bicycle traffic is permitted in Nonotuck Park during daylight hours using the minimum social distancing of 6 feet at all times.

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.

Planning

Due to the COVID-19 state of emergency, the Planning Department is not accepting any new applications for projects that require a public hearing. All City offices are closed until April 7, 2020. We will re-evaluate accepting applications at that time.

If you have questions or would like to discuss a potential application, please email the appropriate staff person:

- Jeff Bagg, City Planner (Planning Board) jbagg@easthamptonma.gov
- Jamie Webb, Assistant Planner (Zoning Board of Appeals) jwebb@easthamptonma.gov
- Cassie Trager, Conservation Agent (Conservation Commission) ctragert@easthamptonma.gov

Police Department

In conjunction with U.S. Attorney Lelling, the police department warns residents of falling prey to these COVID-19 scams.

Massachusetts residents who believe they are victims of fraud or other criminal activity related to the pandemic should contact the United States Attorney’s Office at USAMA.victimassistance@usdoj.gov or call 1-888-221-6023 and leave a message. Members of the public can also contact the FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) by visiting http://www.ic3.gov/. If you or someone you know are in immediate danger, please call .

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 day cares, elementary, and secondary schools are shut down per the Governor's Executive Order at least through April 6, 2020. There are exempt day care centers open with the focus on care for 1st Responder and essential staff’s children. The list of approved centers follow this document.

**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](http://www.cdc.gov)
- [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)
- [https://easthamptonma.gov/health-department.html](http://https://easthamptonma.gov/health-department.html)
- [www.epsd.us](http://www.epsd.us)
- [www.facebook.com/easthampton413](http://www.facebook.com/easthampton413)