



# TOWN OF BEDFORD

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BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01730

## Coronavirus COVID-19 Information

**March 11, 2020 – UPDATE – 7:38 PM**

If you need this document translated, please call your child's school principal - Si necesita este documento traducido, por favor comuníquese con la escuela de su hijo - Se você precisa este documento traduzido, entre em contato com a escola do seu filho - Si vous avez besoin de traduire ce document, s'il vous plaît contacter l'école de votre enfant - 如果你需要这份文件翻译, 请联系您的孩子的学校 - ترجمة إلى تحتاجين/ تحتاج كنت إذا, طفلاتك/طفلك بمدرسة الاتصال يرجى العربية اللغة إلى الوثيقة هذه

The Bedford COVID-19 Task Force met Wednesday to review the latest guidance from the Department of Public Health, the office of Governor Charlie Baker, and Town Legal Counsel.

The Governor has declared a State of Emergency in Massachusetts due to COVID-19. On Wednesday, March 11, 2020, DPH announced the number of total cases of COVID-19, the illness associated with the novel coronavirus, rose to 95 in Massachusetts.

### Active Case

Since our last update on March 10, 2020 the Department of Public Health (DPH) has notified Town health officials that an additional adult household member of the first presumed positive case of COVID-19 in Bedford has been tested, and results have returned presumptive positive. Because of this status change, the impacted persons will now enter isolation at their residence. The Bedford High School student family member will remain in quarantine, and have been approved to be tested for COVID-19 by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. The Bedford High School student began showing symptoms on Friday, March 6, 2020 but did not disclose said symptoms to public health officials until today, March 11, 2020. All individuals who are considered close contacts of the most recent presumed positive adult Bedford case are being notified by public health officials, and will be given appropriate instructions.

Using defined Department of Public Health protocols, contacts of individuals who have not yet been tested, or found positive, would not normally be notified. However, as the student lives in such close quarters with two presumed positive cases, and as Town public health officials now know the student is symptomatic, Town public health officials have initiated close contact outreach for the impacted students. Additionally, out of an abundance of caution, Superintendent Jon Sills, is closing Bedford High School for tomorrow, March 12, 2020. This will give Town public health officials, and School District personnel, time to identify, and notify, contacts of the impact student. Further decisions on extended school closing will be communicated tomorrow. While some of those contacts may have siblings in other schools, it is not advised by DPH at this time that contacts of contacts be identified or quarantined.

### Town/School Decisions Regarding Gatherings

The Town of Bedford continues to make the decisions its leadership team feels are best for its community, taking into account the latest information and guidance from state and federal authorities.

Effective immediately, the Town has put the following measures in place:

- As the recommended guidance from DPH is to discourage non-essential public meetings, all non-essential Town Board and Committee meetings are cancelled until further notice. At this time, essential Town committees are the Board of Health, Selectmen, and the School Committee. Meetings of the Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Board of Assessors, and Planning Board will be treated on a case by case basis. At this time, the requirements of the Open Meeting Law have not been relaxed. As such, remote participation is limited, and a physical quorum is still required.
- All large-gatherings (more than 50 people) hosted by, or on, Town and School property are suspended until further notice.
- The municipal election is still on. In advance of the municipal election, Saturday, March 14, procedures and protocols have been put in place to ensure the safety of voters, and election officials. The municipal election is not considered a large gathering. Town Facilities Department staff will be on site at John Glenn Middle School to provide hourly cleaning, public safety officials will ensure no more than fifty people are in the gymnasium at one time, and a new space layout and social distancing will be implemented for voters while standing in line, voting, etc. Election officials will be provided with personal protective equipment (gloves, sanitizer, and sanitizing wipes). Voting machines and booths will be cleaned, as will voting booths, throughout the day.

Municipal elections can only be postponed with a court order, or by declaration of the Secretary of State. Town officials have been in contact with the Secretary of State's office, and await guidance on our upcoming election. As of today, March 11, 2020, the Secretary of State has requested emergency election powers from the State legislature. The emergency authority being sought by Secretary of State William Galvin would include the power to postpone an election, or move a polling location in the case of an emergency. Bedford is one of the first municipalities in Massachusetts to hold a municipal election following Governor Baker's state of emergency declaration on March 10, 2020. Secretary Galvin's office, for now, is giving the same advice to town clerks as he did before Super Tuesday, including a reminder to make sure towns have enough poll workers in case some get sick, to wipe down voting booth surfaces and to encourage voters to bring their own pens, if desired.

- **Annual Town Meeting, March 23, 2020, has been postponed.** The Selectmen, Town Moderator, and Town Officials (Town Manager, Superintendent of Schools, Health and Human Services Director, Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Facilities Director) met at 6:00 PM today to discuss COVID-19, and announce declarations related to the steps to mitigate town-wide impact. Per Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 39 Section 10A, Town Meeting, by decree of the Town Moderator, after consultation from Town Officials for up to 30 days to date and time certain for purposes of extreme weather, or public safety. Per tonight's declaration, Town Meeting has been postponed until April 6, 2020 at 7:00 PM in the Bedford High School Auditorium. If necessary, an additional extension may be sought.

After consultation with Town Counsel, the format of Open Town Meeting would be incredibly challenging to manage under the guidelines of social distancing, without limiting the involvement of all residents who wish attend. After evaluating potential mitigations to allow for holding the meeting, including, but not limited to, live-streaming over several rooms throughout Bedford High School to allow for social distancing, it was determined that the safest action is to postpone until a future date. Additionally, DPH guidelines urge older adults, and those with health issues, to avoid large crowds and large events, and thus, Town Officials did not want to limit participation from residents who fall under that category. As the public health ramifications of COVID-19 are evolving, the Town will reevaluate the need for further delay over the next several weeks.

- As Governor Baker's office is urging older adults and those with health issues to avoid large crowds and large events, the Bedford Council on Aging programming will limit all large group events, and implement social distancing for smaller group events.
- All Bedford Free Public Library programs and events are postponed, or cancelled, until further notice. Additionally, meeting rooms at the Library will no longer be available for public use.
- The Town urges reasonable caution and strongly urges all residents practice good hygiene, especially as it relates to hand-washing and covering coughs/sneezes.
- The Town has stated and continues to advise that those — including municipal employees, residents, or students — who are feeling sick with fever or flu symptoms should stay home, self-quarantine, and not report to work or school.

All local actions are being undertaken in accordance with the latest guidelines from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Although the risk to Massachusetts residents of the COVID-19 is generally low, the risk for influenza is currently high. Many of the things you do to help prevent colds and the flu can help protect you against other respiratory viruses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Clean things that are frequently touched (like doorknobs and countertops)

with household cleaning spray or wipes.

- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze. Use a tissue or your inner

elbow, not your hands.

- Stay home if you are sick and avoid close contact with others.

The best source of guidance and recommendations is the DPH website:

[www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus](http://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus).

You can also visit:

<https://www.bedfordma.gov/bedford-board-of-health/pages/covid-19-coronavirus>

Town and School officials, and the Bedford Health Department, remain in continuous communication about this issue, and further updates will be provided to the community as we receive them.