



TOWN OF BEDFORD

97 MCMAHON ROAD
BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01730

Coronavirus COVID-19 Information

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 - إذا كنت تحتاج /تحتاجين إلى ترجمة ، هذه الوثيقة إلى اللغة العربية يرجى الاتصال بمدرسة طفلك/طفلاتك

March 13, 2020

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

The COVID-19 Task Force is comprised of the following Town officials:

Sarah Stanton, Town Manager

Jon Sills, Superintendent of Schools

Heidi Porter, Director of Health and Human Services

Robert Bongiorno, Police Chief

David Grunes, Fire Chief

Taissir Alani, Facilities Director

The Governor has declared a State of Emergency in Massachusetts due to COVID-19.

Active Case

As of today, March 13, 2020, there are three presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 in the Town of Bedford. The Bedford High School student, a family member of the two first presumptive positive cases in Bedford, has now been deemed presumptive positive. The Board of Health has conducted initial surveillance of all of the impacted close contacts of the three presumptive positive cases, and notified those direct contacts to quarantine. The Town will continue to notify residents as we receive information from the Department of Public Health.

School Update-March 13, 2020

As we had hoped, additional area schools have decided to close for the next two weeks. As of today, 22 additional Merrimack Valley districts have announced their closures. This will hopefully have a broader impact on the spread of the virus.

While our four public schools are closed during the next two weeks, faculty, students and families will not have access to the buildings. Phone calls to the schools that require immediate assistance will be transferred to the district's main number. Principals, however, will be checking their messages daily. The central office will have limited personnel on site at least through Wednesday. All phone messages left on the district's main number will be checked daily.

We ask families to cooperate with the schools to ensure that their children do not congregate, hang out at malls, or otherwise undermine the value of the social distancing that closing the schools seeks to accomplish in order to interrupt the spread of the virus.

We are aware that members of our school community who are food insecure may be challenged to replace the school lunches that their children depend upon. The Town and the District are collaborating to make sure that the Bedford Food Pantry is sufficiently stocked so that impacted families may receive food support.

With regard to enrichment learning during the next two weeks, please see the letter below from our assistant superintendent of schools and special education director.

Dear Families,

Thank you for patience as we work through the logistics of this ever evolving situation surrounding the COVID-19. Because Bedford Public Schools has closed for this two-week period, we will treat this time period as we would any closing or vacation. Based on guidance from the Department of Education, we will not be providing educational services to the general student population, therefore, we will also not be providing services to students with disabilities during this time.

Although we are not in session for the next two weeks, it would be valuable for students to maintain their skills and participate in enrichment activities. Administrators and teachers at each of our four schools have been working quickly and with care to prepare suggested activities that students can do at home. The four principals, (Ms. Benoit-Davis, Mr. Ackerman-Lane, Mr. Tracey-JGMS, Ms. Galante-BHS) will be sending a letter to all families outlining the opportunities that will be available for students. Please make sure to read this information carefully, and if you have questions, there will be information on where to direct your questions.

Again, thank you for your patience and understanding. We wish you and your family well during this trying time.

Sincerely,

Tricia Clifford, Ed.D, Assistant Superintendent of Schools

Marianne Vines, M.Ed. Director of Special Education

Town Update- March 13, 2020

- The Town Public Health officials advise that, with school being out, parents and students to be mindful of not congregating in large groups. The intention of the release from school and closure of the Bedford Free Public Library, and Council on Aging, and other spaces where people congregate, is to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Those efforts are thwarted if people in turn congregate at residences, restaurants, and public spaces. Residents are encouraged to be proactive in protecting their health and preventing the spread of COVID-19 by limiting their exposure to others.

- Last night, March 12, 2020, Governor Baker released guidance relaxing the requirements of the Open Meeting Law. <https://www.mass.gov/the-open-meeting-law>.
- **At this time, the changes in the Open Meeting Law will only apply to the essential Town boards: Board of Selectmen, Board of Health, and the School Committee.** The Town is working with our Information Technology department to make the technology available to hold a meeting remotely, per the guidelines of the Governor's policy. The direction remains that the aforementioned three boards should only meet if it is for essential or time-sensitive decision-making.
- For the other regulatory boards (Board of Assessors, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, and the Zoning Board of Appeals), the need to meet is being assessed by Town Legal Counsel on a case-by-case basis regarding the immediacy of decisions before each Board, matters that require statutory review/evaluation, and deadlines associated with filing. As of today, March 13, 2020, the Governor and/or Attorney General have provided no guidance on waiving regulatory deadlines. However, for the other Boards listed above, Town Counsel is drafting guidelines regarding applicants to sign agreements to grant extensions in writing. The Town Manager will reach out to each individual Board chair to discuss options.
- **No Bedford Board or Committee not listed in either the first two bullet points above will be eligible, at this time, to take advantage of the Open Meeting Law changes put in to effect by Governor Baker on March 12, 2020.** As Bedford has over 40 active Town committees, it will take time to evaluate all technology options, and assess the new parameters of the Open Meeting Law. The Town Manager will provide update if, and when, that changes.
- **As of today, March 13, 2020, the municipal election is still on.** Legally, municipal elections can only be postponed with a court order, legislative action, or by declaration of the Secretary of State. The Town has reached out to the local legislative delegation and the Secretary of State, and we await further guidance.
- In advance of the municipal election, Saturday, March 14, 2020 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.
- Town officials have been in contact with the Secretary of State's office, and await guidance on our upcoming election. On March 11, 2020, the Secretary of State 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.
- 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.
- For previous updates on COVID-19 please review www.bedfordma.gov

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

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.