



TOWN OF BEDFORD

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BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01730

Coronavirus COVID-19 Information

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March 15, 2020

The Bedford COVID-19 Task Force met Sunday 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 Cases

As of today, March 15, 2020, there are three (3) presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 in the Town of Bedford, and one (1) Person Under Investigation. We are actively monitoring the quarantined close contacts of the 3 presumptive positive cases, and if they report applicable symptoms (fever, shortness of breath, cough, chills, etc.) we direct them to contact their health care provider. Anyone exhibiting flu-like symptoms should immediately self-quarantine, isolate from household members and contact their healthcare provider for further guidance on whether testing is warranted.

Town/School Call for Kindness-March 15, 2020

As the Town of Bedford navigates the uncertainty and challenges of COVID-19, Town and School officials would like to implore residents to remember the value and importance of kindness, and civility. Bedford is a community known for its committed and engaged residents, exceptional schools, and neighborhood camaraderie. Now, more than ever, is the time to be a good neighbor. Support one another. Check in on the elderly, and immune-compromised. Call your loved ones, and neighbors, and check up on their mental and physical health. Assist with technology. The use of technology will be more important than ever as we practice social-distancing. Teach a family member, or neighbor, a new skill: how to pay bills online, use mobile options for games like mahjong or crossword puzzles, and teach the joy of video chat capabilities. (FaceTime and Skype can be a wonderful way to share a little laughter when you're home bound.) Over the past week, it has been wonderful to see the spirit of volunteerism of residents offering to deliver food, provide emotional support, and share words of encouragement, solidarity and optimism.

It's been equally as disheartening to see unkind sentiments directed towards specific groups within our community, and the family first impacted by this pandemic in Bedford. As a Town, we're better than that. We're kinder. We're more compassionate. We're more empathetic. Now is the time to show each other what makes Bedford such a wonderful place to live, and work. We're in this together. Be kind to one another.

Town Update-March 15, 2020

- **Town officials continue to urge residents to deploy social distancing, and limit social gathering. Residents are urged to not congregate at restaurants, bars, malls, or recreation spaces.** Order take-out, get your coffee to-go, pick up a gift certificate, and support the local business communities from a distance.
- **To ensure our residents and small businesses in Bedford impacted by COVID-19 are supported during this tumultuous time, the Town of Bedford will be establishing an Emergency Relief Fund.** Stay tuned over the next several days for guidance on how to donate.
- As of today, March 15, 2020, Town Hall/Town Center remain open to the public during normal business hours. We anticipate closing Town buildings to the public at large effective Tuesday, March 17, 2020 to ensure the safety of our residents, and Town staff.
- As the buildings will be operating with reduced staffing tomorrow, Monday, March 16, 2020, prior to entering Town Hall, or Town Center, a police officer will ask residents/visitors questions relative to COVID-19: have you traveled in the list of countries identified by the CDC as high-risk, have you been in close contact with a person deemed presumptive positive, and are you showing flu-like symptoms? If the answer is yes to any of the aforementioned questions, the person will not be allowed to enter the building and will be advised to return home and quarantine. **The Town strongly encourages the public to limit physical visits to Town buildings if not critical. Call or e-mail, staff will be available to answer questions.**
- **Effective Monday, March 16, 2020, all Town owned playgrounds, parks and athletic fields will be closed to the public.** As the Town continues to reinforce the importance of social distancing, and the public health damage created by social gatherings, Town Officials struggled to see so many of the athletic fields, and playgrounds, heavily used by families over this past weekend. Under normal circumstances, a sure sign of Spring would be kids and families holding batting practice at our baseball fields, and swinging side by side at our parks. Understanding the need for fresh air and recreation, the Town is recommending residents, deploying social distancing, take advantage of our comprehensive trail system. However, please do not coordinate small, or large-group, hikes.
- The Town is working closely to ensure the Bedford Food Pantry remains open. The Town will work with the Food Pantry Board and Manager, and offer to have Youth and Family Services personnel to staff the pantry. The Ashby Place Food Pantry will continue as scheduled with food drop off instead of pick up.
- **As so many kind-hearted residents have asked if they can donate/drop off food to the Bedford Food Pantry, the Town encourages residents, at this time, to donate monetarily to: <http://www.bedfordfoodpantry.org/content/donate>.** As the Town cannot ensure the safety of food dropped off, we would encourage monetary donations as a way to assist those in need.
- Working with our partners at the Bedford Public Schools, the Town will be stocking the food pantry with several bulk orders placed through the BPS food services vendor. Over the next few days, the Town will announce plans to deliver food to home-bound residents in need, and establish a drive-up system for residents who are able to leave their home.
- The Town has established an internal Emergency Management account to track the municipal expenses, and labor costs, related to COVID-19 management. As there has not been guidance provided by Federal or State leadership on emergency relief funding, the Town has proactively created the fund to account for expenses related to this pandemic.
- Yesterday, March 14, 2020, the Town of Bedford successfully held the annual municipal election. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Town staff, poll-workers, and public safety personnel, Election Day was a success. Thank you to Interim Town Clerk Rosemary Harvell, and her staff members Ashley Cote, and Ashley Large, for managing an exceptionally difficult day with grace, and competence. An extra special thanks to Town employees, Sharon Cozzi, Colleen Doyle, Lynn Newhouse, Marcia Pyles, Alyssa Sandoval, and Charlie Ticotsky for helping staff the election on short-notice. The election would not have taken place without the support of the Town's hearty and trusted poll workers, dedicated municipal facilities department staff, and the leadership of public safety personnel. Congratulations to the newly elected town officials. (Here's hoping the next election is a bit easier for all involved!)
- 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, not report to work or school, and contact their medical provider to determine if they should be tested for COVID-19.
- For previous updates on COVID-19 please review the COVID-19 News and Announcements Page at on the town website (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).

It's important to remember that while the COVID-19 outbreak is evolving quickly, influenza is currently circulating in the area. 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.
- Employ social distancing if you are not otherwise required to be in quarantine and must go out.

The best source of guidance and recommendations is the DPH website: www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus

Or, if you are without internet capabilities, please call the State hotline: 2-1-1

You can also the Town of Bedford website for local updates and actions: www.bedfordma.gov

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.