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Town Manager

TOWN OF
WATERTOWN
Office of the Town Manager

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**Town Manager’s Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update
April 17, 2020**

COVID-19 Numbers

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health is reporting that as of April 16, 2020 there are:

- 32,181 cases statewide
- 7,206 Middlesex County
- 1,245 deaths statewide

For more state data, visit www.mass.gov/coronavirus.

Watertown has a total of 132 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 37 community members have recovered from the virus. Three Town employees have had confirmed cases. Watertown has recorded five COVID-19 fatalities. Our thoughts go out to the families as they mourn the loss of their loved one.

Watertown COVID-19 Case age Distribution

19 and Under	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70 and over	Unknown/no age recorded	Total
4	12	28	21	18	21	24	4	132

Watertown COVID-19 Resource Guide

The Watertown Free Public Library has developed a COVID-19 resource guide for Watertown residents. The guide will be updated frequently. www.watertownlib.org/covid19guide

How will you find out about local emergencies?

To get Emergency Alerts from the Town of Watertown text WATERTOWNMA to 888-777. Your cell phone number will be in the system without having to establish an Everbridge account. You also have the opportunity to add your email address into the system at this time. You would then receive all emails and/or texts from the system. If you already have an Everbridge account, this is not necessary, as you will continue to receive the notifications sent by the Town.

Watertown COVID-19 Informational Call Center and Email

For general COVID-19 questions not specific to the Town of Watertown, all Massachusetts residents are encouraged to call the State's **2-1-1 Hotline** that is staffed by operators 24/7 and with translators available in multiple languages. Residents with questions can dial 2-1-1 from any landline or cell phone or use the live chat option on the **Mass 2-1-1 website (mass211.org)**.

The Town of Watertown has established a COVID-19 informational call center to allow residents and business owners to ask non-medical questions specific to COVID-19 in Watertown. The call center will be staffed Monday through Friday from 8am to 4pm and the number for the call center is **# 617-972-6565**. Questions can also be emailed to **COVID19@police.watertown-ma.gov**.

Please call 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency.

Calls should not be made to 9-1-1 for questions regarding COVID-19.

Four (4) electronic sign boards have been placed around Town with the message: "Stay safe, stay home". Further message updates will be provided as needed.

Financial Relief for Taxpayers

In accordance with "An Act to Address Challenges Faced by Municipalities and State Authorities Resulting From COVID-19," Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020, the Town of Watertown has adopted local options to extend the due date of the 4th quarter real and personal property tax payments and a waiver of interest on water/sewer bills paid by June 30, 2020.

1. The due date of your real and personal property tax bill has been extended to **June 1, 2020**. June 1, 2020 is the new due date even if the due date for payment on your previously mailed tax bill is May 1, 2020.
2. The Town of Watertown will also waive interest and other penalties on water and/or sewer bills with a due date on or after March 10, 2020 as long as payment is made before June 30, 2020. This waiver of interest does not apply to bills with due dates that were before March 10, 2020 or if the bill is not paid by June 30, 2020.

Update on Unemployment Compensation

Federal data indicates that over 570,000 Massachusetts residents have applied for unemployment since March 15, including about 100,000 in the last week (Typical volume is between 7,000-10,000 applications per week). As of today, the Department of Unemployment Assistance is paying unemployment compensation to over 315,000 Massachusetts residents.

BUSINESS SEMINAR

Below is a link to an online seminar aimed at some of the tough discussions that businesses need to make in these uncertain times. Having the guidance of those with professional expertise in how businesses should approach future planning should prove to be very helpful.

Webinar: A Roadmap to Tough Choices: We know many of our businesses are trying to make difficult decisions about how to maintain business continuity in the context of great uncertainty. Hear from experts at the law firm of Murray, Plumb & Murray on critical steps you need to take to safeguard your cash and protect your assets during the COVID-19 pandemic while evaluating the risks and rewards of continued operation for you and your business. The webinar will focus on common pitfalls of financial contingency planning, offer strategies for selecting the right financing options, and help you identify when closure might be your best option. [Join us on April 22 at 2pm: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_bSZYKj-cT7ig2VlqzwZBFQ](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_bSZYKj-cT7ig2VlqzwZBFQ)

April 14th Town Council Meeting – Budget Delay and Council President’s Remarks

Given the uncertainty of revenues including state aid for the upcoming fiscal year as a result of COVID-19, Town Council voted to delay the submission of the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget from April 28th to a date to be determined. Senator Will Brownsberger had provided the following on April 10th, “The consuming challenge that the legislature must soon confront is budgeting for the next fiscal year. With the economy in free fall, state revenues are in free fall. Normally by now, both the House and the Senate would be well along in developing proposed budgets. We have had to restart the budget process from the beginning. It will be weeks before we can tell municipalities how much money they can plan on in state aid or begin to shape plans for state programs.”

Additionally, Town Council President Mark S. Sideris provided [remarks](#) on efforts related to COVID-19 at the April 14th Town Council Meeting.

Face Coverings and Cloth Masks Advisory

The Baker-Polito Administration issued guidance to residents and Executive Branch employees recommending the use of a face covering or cloth mask when in situations where maintaining proper social distancing measures are not possible to prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as in a grocery store. A face covering may include anything that covers your nose and mouth, including a mask, scarf or bandana. Health care masks, such as N95 masks, should not be used and should be preserved for health care workers and first responders. Cloth masks should not be worn by young children under the age of two, persons with difficulty breathing, or those who are unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. Instructions on how to make a cloth mask are available from the CDC [here](#). [Read the guidance here](#).

Tweet from Watertown Police

Watertown Police (@WatertownPD) tweeted at 8:43 AM on Fri, Apr 17, 2020:

Please watch this very easy way to make a homemade mask. Protect yourself and others by wearing one in public places. 🧐 #stayhome #StaySafe

<https://twitter.com/WatertownPD/status/1251129053664419846?s=09>

Get the official Twitter app at <https://twitter.com/download?s=13>

Grocery Store Worker Priority Testing ([News Release](#))

The Baker-Polito Administration and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security expanded access to the free, priority COVID-19 testing sites for first responders to now include grocery store and supermarket workers. The men and women who provide critical access to food and other necessities may schedule an appointment to receive COVID-19 testing at the sites located at Gillette Stadium in Foxboro and the Big E fairgrounds in West Springfield. All appointments must be made in advance by the worker’s supervisor or manager, and personnel do not need to be symptomatic to be eligible.

Governor Signs Additional COVID-19 Muni Bill

Governor Baker signed into law *An Act to Further Address Challenges Faced by Municipalities, School Districts and State Authorities Resulting From COVID-19*. To view a section-by-section summary of this important legislation, please [click here](#)

Additional Measures to Reduce Crowding at State Parks ([News Release](#))

In an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Baker-Polito Administration announced several new measures throughout the state parks system. To expand pedestrian and cyclist access, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will open segments of three parkways including **Greenough Boulevard (Little Greenough) between Arsenal Street and North Beacon Street** for recreational use.

Update on Mobile Testing Program for Long Term Care, Assisted Living Residences and DDS Group Homes

On March 31, the Commonwealth implemented a project that allows for safe, on-site testing of residents of nursing and rest homes with a quick turnaround. The program has expanded and can now test both symptomatic and asymptomatic residents and staff at nursing homes, rest homes, Assisted Living Residences, and Department of Developmental Services group homes. Facilities with clinical capacity, can also order test kits to perform themselves. The program operates under the auspices of the Massachusetts National Guard, in partnership with the Department of Public Health and Broad Institute of Cambridge, See a summary below of activity yesterday and since the launch of the program.

Onsite Testing

Date	Number of Tests Completed	Facilities Visited
4/15	1311	15
Total (as of 4/15)	5,883	279

Testing Kits Provided

Date	Number of Kits Sent	Facility Count
4/15	2351	26
Total (as of 4/15)	10,995	103

Cases in Long term Care Facilities (as of 4/16)

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	4798
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	232
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	610

Expanded Date Reporting

The Command Center continues to provide the most updated data related to cases, planning and response at the links below

- Daily dashboard data are [published here](#)
- Cases, city/town, & Hospital facility data are [published here](#)
- PPE distribution data are [published here](#)
- Hospital capacity published data are [published here](#)

Nursing Home Family Resource Line

The State has launched a dedicated hotline that will connect family members of nursing home and rest home residents with information and resources they seek. Created so that family and community members have one central contact that they can reach out to if they have questions or concerns about the care their loved one is receiving during the COVID-19 outbreak. The line is staffed from 9 AM – 5 PM, seven days a week. Staff will coordinate across state agencies to help callers find answers to their questions. Families and community members can call the line at (617) 660-5399.

Remote Services Available for Those Facing Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

If you or someone you know is struggling with issues related to sexual or domestic violence, many services are still available to you remotely during this COVID-19 public health emergency. Of you are in immediate danger, call 911. If you are in need of services visit REACH Beyond Domestic Violence at <https://reachma.org/watertown-domestic-violence-support/>

Attorney General's Guidance on Local Authority Amid COVID-19 & New Website – Frontlinema.org

On April 15th, the Office of Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey forwarded guidance on Local Authority amid COVID-19 [here](#).

AG Healey also announced the creation of a new website - [Frontlinema.org](#) - for our frontline heroes. This website was created in response to the urgent need for centralized information for frontline workers, including personal protective equipment (PPE), prioritized testing, safe housing, meals, self-care and emergency child care. It also invites the public to help by offering messages of support, buying meals for frontline workers, helping to provide a safe place for workers to stay between shifts, and ways to donate PPE. You can find all of the Attorney General's COVID-19 Resources [here](#).

Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles implements further extensions

The Registry of Motor Vehicles has implemented further extensions for expiring motor vehicle inspection stickers, passenger plate registrations, professional credentials, and licenses and permits, including Commercial Driver's Licenses and Permits (CDLs / CLPs).

These additional extensions under Governor Baker's declaration of a State of Emergency on March 10 replicate the ongoing measures the RMV is taking to reduce the need for customers to physically visit an RMV Service Center or one of its business partners' facilities, allowing for social distancing by decreasing non-essential travel and customer volume.

Details on all of these extensions and additional information on RMV services and the RMV's response to COVID-19 [can be found here](#).

Health Department

The Health Department has created a new portal for COVID-19 Information : COVID-19 Resource Center where all COVID-19 related information will be posted :

<https://www.ci.watertown.ma.us/978/COVID-19-Resource-Center>

The [Watertown Community Foundation's Resiliency Coalition](#) is supporting a part-time Volunteer Coordinator to work with Jenna Willis, Town/[Wayside's](#) Social Service Resource Specialist, to coordinate a network of volunteers to assist residents with essential needs. Stephanie Venizelos, Community Wellness Program Manager will be working with Jenna to connect the new coordinator to stakeholders in Town who have expressed interest in being involved in a community volunteer initiative.

Attached is the [flyer](#) that was distributed widely today with information about free food delivery to our Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligible residents. The flyer is posted on the new Health Covid-19 Resource Center. The Health Department will be adding resources on wellness topics such as social isolation and staying active to this new page regularly.

Watertown Public Schools

The Watertown Public Schools continue to provide remote continuous learning opportunities for our students during the COVID-19 closure. The District recently released the Extended Learning Plan-Phase 2 to ensure continuity of instruction throughout the closure through May 4. Information on the Plan can be found at: <https://bit.ly/WPSELP20>. The teachers, principals, directors, and the English as a Second Language coordinator continually reach out to families to ensure access to our online resources. The WPS Technology Department and our principals deployed 40+ hotspots and well over 200 Chromebooks to elementary school families. Our middle school and high school students have school-issued Chromebooks as well. The School Nutrition Department continues to provide Grab n Go meals to any student who could benefit from this service on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in the WHS parking lot from 11am to 1pm. They are currently serving meals to 200+ students.

Watertown Free Public Library

The Watertown Free Public Library will **remain closed until Monday, May 4th**. The library has a full schedule of online storytimes for children plus virtual programs and workshops for adults and teens as well. The full schedule is available on the library website www.watertownlib.org. All programs are listed on the event calendar. An electronic newsletter detailing many other resources available remotely will be emailed every Monday (sign up for the newsletter through the website). **Lastly, as previously mentioned, the Library developed a COVID-19 Resource Guide which will be updated frequently and is available through the website at www.watertownlib.org/covid19guide.**

Watertown Council on Aging/Senior Center/Food Pantry

The Watertown Council on Aging/Senior Center will **remain closed for all programs and services** including all activities, exercise classes, AARP tax appointments, SHINE counseling, podiatry and blood pressure clinics, shuttle bus runs and Senior Parking Permits **until Monday, May 4th**. The Watertown Food Pantry continues to be open Tuesdays, 10 AM until 2 PM at 80 Mt. Auburn Street, rear. Donations may be dropped off at that time too. Senior Center staff is available to answer your questions and to help connect you to resources you need. Call the Senior Center at (617) 972-6490 or send an e-mail to SeniorCenter@watertown-ma.gov.

Watertown Veterans' Services

Watertown Veterans' Services is closed to the public but is still available to assist with administering and applying for benefits. Families and Veterans may reach out to inquire about applying for benefits. Watertown Veterans' Services, in partnership with the Greater Boston Veterans' Collaborative has a detailed spreadsheet with benefits and services—including but not limited to: financial, mental health, transportation, and food resources—available to Veterans and others during this pandemic. The list is constantly being updated and interested Veterans and families should contact Patrick George, Veterans' Services Officer (VSO) for the most up to date list. Please contact the VSO at: PGeorge@watertown-ma.gov or (617) 972-6416 (Office) and (781) 645-9127 (Cell)
[COVID-19 Resource Guide](#)

Parks and Recreation

All programs offered by the Watertown Recreation Department will **remain cancelled until Monday, May 4th**. **All fields, courts, track, tot lots and dog parks in Watertown will remain closed until May 4th**. Please adhere to this request and follow all guidelines by the Watertown Health Department and all governmental agencies.

Town Hall will remain closed to the public until Monday, May 4th. Town Hall and the Department of Public Works Administrative Offices remain available only by phone or online. All calls and emails will be responded to Monday through Friday 8:30am-5:00pm.

[Visit the Department directory for phone numbers.](#)

This includes the following Town Offices:

- Town Manager, TownMgr@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6465
- Health Department, Health@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6446
- Senior Center, SeniorCenter@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6490
- Recreation Office, Recreation@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6494
- DPW Administrative, DPW1@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 617-972-6420
- Inspectional Services, buildinginspector@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6480
- Treasurer/Collector, Treas&Collectors@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6450
- Assessor, Assessor@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6410
- Town Clerk/Vital Records, TownClerks@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6486
- Veterans Services, PGeorge@watertown-ma.gov, (617) 972-6416

Emergency Management Team

The Town of Watertown Emergency Management Team is meeting daily to monitor the developments in the outbreak of the coronavirus. We have used these meetings to keep an organized flow of information and to develop strategies to best respond to the needs of our community. We will continue to update the community through the Watertown Health Department's web page.

<https://www.watertown-ma.gov/965/CORONAVIRUS>.

Please continue to take the following actions to limit the spread of COVID-19:

- Stay safe, stay home
- Practice social distancing – when in public spaces try to remain at least 6-feet away from others.
- Stay home if you are sick – and avoid close contact with others.
- Cover your mouth – when you cough or sneeze use a tissue or your inner elbow, not your hands.
- Wash your hands – with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based sanitizing gel.

We also recommend the following resources:

Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Resource Page:

<https://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus>

Center for Disease Control COVID-19 information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Town Manager's Coronavirus (COVID-19) (6) [Statements/Updates](#)

We are in this together

We are living in an unprecedented time where our world, our nation and our community, is faced with the threat of an international pandemic known as COVID-19.

All of our Town employees are incredibly committed to ensuring the Town can safely meet the needs of our community while we are also protecting our employees' safety. All departments have implemented vigorous social distancing and hygiene protocols. I am so grateful for all of our employees' efforts under difficult circumstances.

The members of the Honorable Town Council continue to be available to help all residents and to provide updates/information to protect the health and safety of all the residents of Watertown.

I want to thank all of the members of our community for your cooperation and efforts to date; and for your continued actions to limit the spread of COVID-19. **Additionally, please check on your neighbors who may live alone. If you have any concerns, please email us at COVID19@police.watertown-ma.gov or call the Police Department at (617) 972-6500; and we will follow up.**

Watertown is a resilient community and we are all in this together. We will continue to support each other and stay strong, Watertown Strong!