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Town Manager

TOWN OF WATERTOWN

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Town Manager’s Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update March 5, 2021

Watertown has a total of 2,117 confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 and 1,997 community members have recovered from the virus. Thirty-two Town employees have had confirmed cases. Watertown has recorded thirty-three COVID-19 fatalities. Our thoughts go out to the families as they mourn the loss of their loved one.

Watertown COVID-19 Case age Distribution¹

19 and Under	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70 and over	Unknown/no age recorded	Total
249	388	404	285	276	238	276	1	2,117

Watertown COVID-19 Positivity Rates Stabilize

However, positivity rates are still high, continued vigilance urged.

According to the Mass Department of Public Health (DPH) Dashboard, Watertown’s weekly COVID-19 positivity rate has decreased slightly to 1.49% from 1.65% last week. Watertown is currently considered "yellow" or "moderate risk" for COVID-19 transmission. Although vaccinations are starting to be administered it will be months before everyone will have a chance to be vaccinated. Watertown Public Health officials continue to urge compliance to all safety protocols to reduce the spread of the virus. [View the DPH dashboard.](#)

Educators Eligible for COVID-19 Vaccinations Starting March 11

On March 3rd, the State announced that K-12 educators, child care workers and K-12 school staff will be [eligible to schedule COVID-19 vaccine appointments starting March 11th](#). This group of workers will join the current eligible groups (including 65+ and individuals with two or more [certain health conditions](#)), and residents and staff of affordable senior housing. To book an appointment at a State site visit [mass.gov/vaccine](https://www.mass.gov/vaccine) or call 2-1-1. Due to high call volumes, please expect long phone wait times.

MEMA COVID-19 Command Center Situation Report

Yesterday, the Command Center released the comprehensive [COVID-19 Weekly Public Health Report](#), including community-specific COVID-19 case and testing data. The report also includes risk categories for each city and town based on the average daily incident rate over the past 14 days.

¹ There is a difference between the Commonwealth’s reported numbers and what the Watertown Board of Health can confirm through the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network (MAVEN).

Veterans COVID Vaccine Information

Bedford VA Health Care System

Bedford VA Health Care system is Accepting Veterans enrolled in the VA regardless of age. Veterans must be enrolled in the VA Health Care system to receive the vaccination; they can call the Bedford Campus: (781) 687-2275 to determine eligibility. If they are already enrolled, they can call 781-687-4000 to schedule their vaccination appointment.

Boston VA Health Care System

The Boston VA Health Care System is scheduling Veterans over the age of 55. Veterans must contact their local VA eligibility office to apply for VA benefits if they are not already enrolled in the health care system. Please note: applying for VA health care does not guarantee you will receive a COVID Vaccine; you need to be eligible and enrolled to schedule a vaccination. Changes to vaccine availability within the VA system will be updated as soon as possible. Here are the phone numbers for all local VA hospital eligibility offices: Brockton Campus: (774) 826-2515 or (774) 826-2513 Jamaica Plain Campus: (857) 364-5269 West Roxbury Campus: (857) 203-5463 or (857) 203-3167.

Free COVID-19 Testing for Watertown Residents – Additional Slots

The Town of Watertown is offering, by appointment only, one - free COVID-19 Test for Watertown residents. Testing is free, does not require a medical referral and you do not need to have COVID-19 symptoms to get tested. Pre-registration is required to receive a test (pre-registration details below) and we ask that you only sign up for one test to allow other residents access to testing.

Testing will be held inside the Commander's Mansion 440 Talcott Avenue on the following dates and times:

Tuesday March 9 from 1:00 PM to 7:00 PM

Wednesday March 10 from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM

In order to obtain an appointment a Watertown resident must pre-register by clicking on the following link: <https://proemscovidtesting.as.me/watertown>

This is not a drive-up test. Watertown residents who have an appointment will enter into the Commander's Mansion and with the assistance of Pro Ambulance employees will conduct a self-administering nasal swab (PCR test).

Test results: As a reminder, a negative test does not mean you cannot spread COVID-19, or get infected with COVID-19, at a later date. Residents should continue to practice physical distancing and hygiene, regardless of a negative test result.

The above dates and times are the only dates and times available for Watertown residents through this program.

There are several additional ways that Watertown residents can get tested for COVID-19:

The state's "Stop the Spread" testing sites are open to all Massachusetts residents, and testing is free of charge. The sites are located in several nearby communities (Framingham, Marlborough, Chelsea, Everett, Revere, Winthrop). Many of these sites are walk-up or drive-through and do not require appointments. Details about each site are provided at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/stop-the-spread#eligibility->

Contact Your Health Care Provider

If you think you may have COVID-19, call your health care provider and tell them about your symptoms. COVID-19 symptoms may include fever, sore throat, loss of sense of smell, cough, difficulty breathing, body aches, or chills. Your health care provider will help you decide whether testing is appropriate. If your provider thinks you should be tested and cannot do the test on-site, they will make the referral to a testing site near you. Here is a current list of COVID-19 testing sites in Massachusetts:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/ma-covid-19-testing-sites/download>

Use the State's Free Online Telehealth Service

The state is partnering with Doctor on Demand to offer free telehealth visits to Massachusetts residents who want to get a quick assessment of symptoms and/or do not have health insurance. Through this service, you will be evaluated online and connected to testing if needed. To access this free service, go to: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/check-your-symptoms-for-covid-19-online>

Call the State's 24-Hour Hotline

If you do not have internet access or do not feel comfortable using websites, you can call 2-1-1, a 24-hour state-supported telephone hotline. Hotline staff can provide guidance on testing.

RESOURCES

- [Massachusetts COVID-19 testing page](#) (Mass.gov)
- [COVID-19 Test Site Locator tool](#)

Restaurant Outdoor Dining Permits Available

As we approach spring and summer seasons, the importance to allow Watertown restaurants to offer more safe seating capacity as the phased reopening continues is clear. Therefore, the Town Manager has decided to extend any existing permits that were granted the previous fall. We will also allow any business owners and managers who have not received a previous approval the ability to apply for temporary outdoor seating for 2021 season. [Application Form](#)

Any questions should be directed to Mike Mena, Zoning Enforcement, mmena@watertown-ma.gov 617 972-6427.

Watertown Public Schools (WPS)

On Wednesday, March 3rd, the Governor held a press conference regarding **vaccinations** for K-12 staff. He announced that beginning next Thursday, March 11th, K-12 and early childhood educators, childcare workers, and K-12 school staff will become eligible to schedule COVID-19 vaccine appointments.

In addition, the Commissioner of Education proposed changes to the current *Student Learning Time* requirement with only in-person instruction counting towards time on learning. District Leadership is considering all options for a return to more in-person instruction in early April. The assumption is that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will support the Commissioner's recommendation at its meeting today, Friday, March 5th.

In WPS, we continue to work collaboratively and expeditiously with our teachers, administration, our Watertown Educators Association (WEA) Working Group, and our School Committee on this matter to make the best decisions for our timeline, which will be shared broadly when complete. We are confident that with all of the mitigation strategies that we have in place, we are in a good position to move into our

next phase on the *Bridge to Return*. If something could have been done to improve safety, we have done it at WPS. Safety continues to be our primary consideration.

All of our student and staff COVID-19 tests have been negative for two weeks in a row!

Our school nutrition department offers seven days of free breakfast and lunch for any students in Watertown. Distribution occurs in the schools for students in person and at the high school parking lot for anyone who is remote on Mondays from 12:00pm-1:30pm and 4:30pm-6:00pm.

Town Hall is open to the public by appointment and drop-off transactions only.

All payments may be placed in the silver box next to the Library book drop-off labeled “Payments Drop-off” located on Thaxter Street. You may also drop-off transactions in person in the Philip Pane Hearing Room, Saltonstall Park side of Town Hall 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM Monday through Friday. Members of the public must wear a face covering while in the building and is asked to maintain physical separation from employees and other visitors of at least six feet.

Many departments offer residents and businesses the ability to conduct transactions by phone, online or by mail. Individuals should check with their intended departments to see if there are options for service.

[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

All Departments are open 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM Monday – Friday. The Building Inspectors’ Offices are open at 7:30 AM.

Watertown Free Public Library

The Watertown Free Public Library is open for browsing. The library is open Monday through Thursday from 10 AM to 7 PM, Friday from 10 AM to 5 PM and Saturday from 9 AM to 12 PM. Monday through Friday from 9 AM to 10 AM is reserved for patrons 65+ and with high-risk health conditions. Every person entering the building must wear a face covering and staff will monitor capacity. In addition, every patron will be asked to sign in with their contact information as required by the State of Massachusetts for contact tracing purposes. That information will be kept confidential and only turned over upon request from the state or local health department. The information will be destroyed after 14 days. For more information on what to expect when returning to the library, please follow this link:

<https://www.watertownlib.org/514/COVID-19-Library-Updates>

The Watertown Free Public Library, Wayside Multiservice Center, and Watertown Police Department launch a mental health discussion series to help people cope with the emotional stressors of living through

a pandemic. The series, led by mental health professionals, begins on February 25 at 6:30 pm with a discussion of sadness, isolation, and anxiety that will highlight strategies for coping and locally available mental health resources. To register for this zoom event, visit the library website or call 617-972-6431. Participants can remain anonymous. Series continues through the spring.

Watertown Council on Aging/Senior Center/Food Pantry

The Watertown Senior Center **remains closed, but Senior Center staff are available to connect you to their Zoom programs and to provide other assistance.** Senior Parking Permits can be renewed over the phone by calling the Senior Center and new permits can be purchased by calling the Senior Center and making an appointment. The monthly Watertown Senior News can be found at <https://www.watertown-ma.gov/150/Activities-during-COVID-19>. The **Senior Shuttle Bus is running again** on a limited, by-appointment basis to the Stop and Shop on Watertown Street. Call the Senior Center on Fridays from 8:30 AM -1 PM to reserve your ride for the following week.

The Watertown Food Pantry continues to be open Tuesdays, 10 AM until 2 PM at 80 Mt. Auburn Street, rear. When going to the Food Pantry, please wear a mask or other face covering to protect your own self and those around you in the parking lot and at the Food Pantry. Food donations (canned goods, cold cereals, peanut butter, and other shelf-stable items) are accepted at the Food Pantry on Tuesdays starting at 9:00 AM until 2 PM. For more information about the Food Pantry or any senior issues, 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. Veterans who receive less than \$2,000 monthly and have less than \$5,000 in assets (\$9,800 if married) should consult Veterans' Services about Chapter 115 benefits. This is a financial lifeline for eligible Veterans and families, please inquire at the contact info below. Water 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. Please contact the VSO at: George@watertown-ma.gov or (617) 972-6416 (Office) and (781) 645-9127 (Cell).

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 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 a COVID-19 email to allow residents and business owners to ask non-medical questions specific to COVID-19 in Watertown. 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.

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

- Wear a mask
- 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.

Helpful Links:

- [COVID-19 Travel Order](#)
- [Mass.gov/findfoodhelp](#)
- [Stop the Spread](#)
- [Reopening Massachusetts](#)
- [Mass.Gov/covid19](#)
- [Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency](#)
- [Unemployment & COVID-19](#)
- [Dept. Of Transitional Assistance Online Portal](#)
- [Emergency Childcare Site](#)
- [COVID-19 Cost Eligibility and Tracking Guidance](#)
- [Watertown COVID-19 Resource Guide](#)

Town Manager’s Coronavirus (COVID-19) (48) [Updates/Statements](#)

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!