



Christine Clancy, P.E.  
DPW Commissioner

TO: Eileen Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*

FROM: Christine Clancy, P.E., DPW Commissioner

DATE: July 24, 2020

RE: C. Rourke – Request City Manager provide a report regarding what is being done to Address the issue of stagnant water in City’s schools and to conduct periodical testing to maintain fresh water

C. Conway- Request City Manager, with the anticipated opening of the 2020-21 School Year, direct the appropriate departments to check and verify that our school buildings and other city buildings meet city and state and code regulations for bathrooms

---

The maintenance of school buildings and planning for reopening of the 2020-21 School Year is a collaborative effort between the Department of Public Works (DPW), the Building Department, and the School Department. These departments meet on a regularly basis to discuss the maintenance needs throughout the school district and especially in preparation for an upcoming school year. This memorandum is a response to both Councilor Rourke’s and Councilor Conway’s motions since they relate to the reopening of schools for the 2020-21 School Year.

A recent topic of concern that surfaced in the media is the risk of airborne bacterial illnesses such as the Legionnaire’s disease that have the potential of developing in vacant and dormant buildings. As a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the school buildings have been largely vacant of teachers and students; however, custodians have continued to work within the buildings each week. Custodians are required to flush all fixtures or pour water down drains and traps at least every two weeks. This measure is to prevent stagnant water from gathering within the fixtures, eliminating the threat of odors or waterborne bacteria. School drinking fountains will be bagged in anticipation of the 2020-21 School Year so they are not used by staff or students. Custodians will run the drinking fountains at least every two weeks to prevent stagnant water.

In the event that stagnant water is suspected, The City of Lowell DPW in coordination with the School Department can obtain water samples and have the water tested by a professional laboratory to confirm that harmful bacteria is not present in the stagnant water. This testing has yet to be completed this season since the staff has kept up with the preventative maintenance of these systems.



Christine Clancy, P.E.  
*DPW Commissioner*

As part of the process for reopening each of the 28 schools, the School, DPW, and Building Departments evaluate each building to identify any repairs or maintenance needs that are required to be addressed prior to the upcoming school year. The Building Department is currently completing inspections of all 28 schools to confirm that the schools are in compliance with the local and state code as well as any COVID-19 specific reopening requirements. This motion specifically mentions bathrooms. Bathrooms are included in each building evaluation. These inspections are underway and will be completed the week of July 27, 2020. Reports will be generated for each building and the school department and DPW will address any required repairs prior to the reopening of the 2020-21 School Year. The Health Department will also be reviewing each of the bathrooms and kitchens to confirm adequate water temperatures at sinks.

As part of the accelerated repair program, the Bailey, Daley, Greenhalge, McAuliffe, Rogers and Sullivan schools are also receiving ADA upgrades as part of their MSBA grant. This construction work is ongoing.

Councilor Conway's motion also indicates that non-School buildings shall be evaluated by the appropriate departments. The current focus is on the schools; however, these evaluations will follow. Specifically, City Hall has capital funding available for bathrooms to be renovated and updated to local and state building codes, including ADA accessibility. The City is in the process of advancing the design on this project. Construction is anticipated to follow the design effort. The anticipated timeline for this construction work is Spring 2021.

Thank you

Cc: Dave Fuller, Building Commissioner  
Jim Green, Deputy Commissioner of Lands & Buildings  
Rick Underwood, Director of School Facilities