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MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Leahy and Members of the City Council
FROM: Eileen Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*
DATE: September 8, 2020
SUBJECT: Reopening Plans at Academic Institutions

Motion by C.Conway on 8/25/2020 - Req. City Mgr., In Light Of Coronavirus Pandemic, To Reach Out To Our Academic Institutions; Lowell Public Schools, UML, MCC, And Private Schools To Discuss The Anticipated Upcoming School Year And How The City Of Lowell Can Help With A Safe And Smooth Opening

Throughout recent months I, along with Director of Health and Human Services Joanne Belanger and other pertinent City officials, have remained in close contact with leaders from Lowell's academic institutions regarding their plans for the upcoming fall 2020 semester. As reopening plans have evolved in response to developments related to the status of the COVID-19 crisis as well as shifting state and federal guidance, we have maintained correspondence with each institution to assess the potential public health implications of their respective plans and to offer the assistance of the City in ensuring that they are executed safely. It bears emphasizing that each institution intends to substantially reduce the in-person presence of students at their facilities and have engaged in extensive efforts to protect the health and safety of their communities.

Middlesex Community College

Citing the goal of avoiding disruptions in student learning in the event of a subsequent surge in COVID-19 cases, Middlesex Community College has decided to conduct nearly all learning remotely, with 95% of courses taking place online during the fall semester which is set to begin on Wednesday, September 9, 2020. This decision significantly limits the number of student and faculty entering the City for classes. The College has identified a limited number of courses that require in-person components such as STEM and performing arts courses. Classrooms hosting in-person courses will be configured to accommodate social distancing. Individuals reporting to campus facilities for these courses or for any other in-person service will be required to comply with strict safety guidelines, including the completion of a daily COVID-19 symptom self-assessment. Students and faculty are required to sign-in upon entry of any MCC building to establish a directory that could be used for contact tracing in the event that a positive case of COVID-19 is identified within the campus community.

President James Mabry informed me that the College will reevaluate this model and determine if it is appropriate for in-person learning to be expanded ahead of the spring semester. He has committed to keeping the City apprised of its decision on the matter.

UMass Lowell

In July, UMass Lowell released a plan under which 25-50% of classes would be held in-person, and 3,600 beds would be opened to students. This plan included stringent testing protocols for students along with other extensive health and safety measures in accordance with state and federal guidelines. Given the anticipated impact of this plan, which would have brought thousands of students into a congregate setting within the City, our Health and Human Services department was in regular contact with University health officials in order to remain informed on their testing, response and isolation plans. Additionally, a broader meeting between City officials and Chancellor Maloney and her team was convened to discuss the details of the University's plan and its implications on the City.

Following the announcement of this plan, the University [decided to scale back](#) the on-campus presence of students and employees for the fall semester citing heightening infection trends in certain regions around the country and Governor Baker's decision to pause the reopening process, among other factors. Under this revised plan, nearly all courses will take place online, with only courses that require in-person instruction taking place on campus. The revised plan also significantly reduces the number of students that are permitted to live in University housing, limiting accommodations in residence halls to only students with extenuating circumstances (e.g. international students), and students who need to live on campus in order to progress academically.

Students who have been determined to need on-campus housing will live in single rooms on the University's east campus. In total, fewer than 800 students will live in University housing during the fall semester. Residential students will be tested through a University-run testing operation on a weekly basis. Certain commuter students and faculty will also be tested weekly. The City's Director of Health and Human Service has remained closely apprised of testing protocols and other control measures in place at the University, and has expressed confidence that the plan in place will ensure the health and safety both of the limited number of UMass Lowell students on campus as well as the surrounding community.

Lowell Public Schools

The Lowell Public Schools released a detailed [plan](#) which gives families the choice of enrolling students in full-time in-person learning, or full-time remote learning. In order to allow for adequate social distancing within school facilities, the number of students that will be allowed to enroll for in-person learning is limited to 3,763, or 25% of the system's total enrollment of 14,906. As "opt-in" applications have exceeded that limit, a weighted lottery will take place at the end of this week to determine which students will be able to attend school on campus.

As the City Council is aware, the City has engaged in extensive efforts to ensure that school facilities are equipped to accommodate in-person learning. Under the direction of Public Works Commissioner Christine Clancy, all buildings are being prepared to standards that meet or exceed guidelines for school facility reopening provided to districts by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. As previously detailed, these efforts have included evaluating all HVAC systems, maximizing outdoor ventilation, assessing filters, and providing standalone HEPA air purifiers for each classroom. We will continue to keep the Council updated on developments related to this work.

Based on documents presented by the Public Schools, it is our understanding that extensive safety measures will be in place in settings where in-person learning is taking place, including the requirement of facemasks, configuration of classrooms to enable social distancing, and enhanced sanitization. The school also has plans in

place for possible COVID-19 exposure scenarios. Recently, the Baker Administration announced a rapid response testing program available to schools experiencing a high volume of confirmed cases.