



Eileen M. Donoghue
City Manager

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Leahy and Members of the City Council

FROM: Eileen Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*

DATE: March 24, 2020

SUBJECT: Coronavirus Response Efforts (**Motion by C. Conway on 2/24/2020** - Req. City Mgr. To Meet With Public Health Department And Contact The CDC (Center For Disease Control) And Provide A Report To The City Council Outlining The Steps We Are Taking To Ensure Our Community Is Safe From The Coronavirus.)

In January, as reported cases of COVID-19 began to climb around the globe, the Lowell Health Department began engaging in extensive efforts to ensure the City of Lowell's preparedness in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak locally. These preparedness efforts have taken place in coordination with local health partners, including Lowell General Hospital, Trinity EMS and the Lowell Community Health Center. Other key City departments, including Police, Fire, Emergency Management, Law and the City Manager's Office have been actively engaged in the preparedness and response efforts. A meeting of each of these departments is convened every morning to discuss developments and determine actions that should be implemented by the City. The national and local situation concerning coronavirus evolves rapidly and as a result, the actions being taken by the City do as well.

Coordination with Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The Health Department has participated in conference calls with DPH since the global onset of coronavirus. These calls have increased in frequency since January. In recent weeks, the Health Department's contact with DPH has been daily. The Health Department has also regularly participated in calls with the CDC to remain apprised of developments and best practices for municipalities related to coronavirus. The City of Lowell's preparedness and response efforts are fully compliant with guidelines and recommendations that have been put forth by state and federal authorities. In addition to remaining in direct contact with these agencies, the City closely monitors any orders issued by the Governor and the President to determine their implications in Lowell.

Handling of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Lowell

On Sunday, March 15, the City of Lowell was notified by DPH that two Lowell residents tested positive for Coronavirus (COVID-19), marking the first presumptive positive cases (now referred to as simply 'positive') in the City. In both cases, health professionals from the City of Lowell acted swiftly in accordance with state law

to conduct investigations. Specifically, our public health nurses began case investigations and contact tracing procedures. This means that our public health nurses make contact with each case to review isolation requirements and other health precautions that need to be taken, as well as begin to identify individuals that may have been in close contact with the case. Each of the contacts is then contacted by a public health nurse to review quarantine requirements and other health precautions that need to be taken. The health department will continue to take these steps as new cases of coronavirus arise.

Activation of Emergency Operation Center (EOC)

On Tuesday, March 17, 2020, the City of Lowell activated its Emergency Operation Center (EOC). The EOC will serve to assist Lowell residents in situations related to coronavirus and to provide immediate responses to inquiries related to the situation. The center will provide Lowell residents with pertinent local information, resources, and updates regarding the status of coronavirus. The EOC will be operational **8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday** until further notice. **The EOC can be reached by phone at 978-674-4052.**

Measures Implemented by the City of Lowell

The City is observing and enforcing all guidelines recommended by state officials aimed at reducing the spread of the virus and keeping the number of impacted individuals within the capacity of the state's healthcare system. This includes the closure of all schools for three weeks, prohibiting gatherings exceeding 25 individuals and prohibiting dine-in service at restaurants. As of Monday, March 16, 2020 all city buildings have closed to the public until further notice. At this time, City of Lowell employees are continuing to report to work and all departments remain open. Residents and individuals needing to conduct business with the City are being assisted remotely by phone, e-mail and by mail. This measure is intended to help reduce the risk of spreading the virus locally and avoid widespread disruptions to City services. Additionally, new protocols have been implemented by police and fire to ensure the safety of our first responders during this public health crisis.

Public Information

The City of Lowell is committed to providing timely and up-to-date information to residents regarding the status of COVID-19 locally and precautionary measures being implemented by the City. The City created a webpage, lowellma.gov/coronavirus, which is updated daily. Updates are regularly posted through the City's social media channels. The City has also disseminated pertinent messages through its CodeRED system, which residents are encouraged to sign up for.

Additional Steps

The City of Lowell is also working with Lowell General Hospital to monitor the need for mass testing. In the event that mass testing is needed, Lowell General Hospital has set up a mobile tent outside of the Saints Campus.

The City has received \$100,000 in emergency funding from the Commonwealth to aid in the response efforts of the Health Department. Additionally, all City employees are tracking compensated hours dedicated to responding to coronavirus in the event that there are opportunities for federal or state reimbursements in the future.