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MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Leahy and Members of the City Council *EMD*

FROM: Eileen Donoghue, City Manager

DATE: April 14, 2020

SUBJECT: Informational Update on Coronavirus Preparedness and 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.)

As of Thursday, April 9, 2020, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 among Lowell residents was 305. The City of Lowell has published an enhanced data report, released on a weekly basis, examining the distribution of these 305 cases by age, sex and neighborhood. As all previous data has reflected, this report demonstrates that all age groups and neighborhoods in the City are at risk for infection.

Based on analysis presented by the state, a surge in confirmed cases is expected to continue through mid-April, with a peak in hospitalized patients anticipated in the coming days. All indicators reflect that the continuation of social distancing will remain the most effective tool available in combatting the spread of coronavirus during this critical period.

The City is continuing to work diligently to confront the immediate public health challenges associated with the coronavirus and contain transmission while also maintaining continuity of essential services and deploying resources to respond to the host of secondary challenges that have been prompted by this crisis.

Health Department Operations

The Health Department is notified of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the City by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. In order to contain transmission, the Health Department is responsible for contacting patients who have tested positive to advise them on quarantining protocols and other pertinent information. The Department conducts contact tracing in each case, meaning they work to identify other individuals that a coronavirus-positive patient may have come in contact with in a setting that could lead to transmission. 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. This process often involves contacting the employer of a patient that has tested positive to review protocols. The Department also monitors the status of cases after this initial contact to determine when patients have tested negative and can be deemed to have recovered.

As the number of confirmed cases in the City has grown, this critical public health task has become increasingly intensive. In order to ensure that it can continue to be conducted thoroughly, the City's school nurses have been redeployed to support the Health Department's limited team of public health nurses. Beginning last week, 26 school nurses are reporting to the Health Department. Additionally, the Health Department has been in contact with Partners In Health (PIH), a non-profit organization which recently formed an collaborative with the state to bolster contact tracing efforts. PIH may be able to support contract tracing efforts in the City by providing additional workers, including translators.

The Health Department remains in frequent contact with health-related entities around the City, including Lowell General Hospital, to facilitate a collaborative community-wide response. Additionally, recognizing the vulnerability of the population served by nursing homes and the risks associated with their high density environments, the Lowell Health Department has worked with the several facilities in the City since the onset of the coronavirus crisis to support their preparedness efforts and has provided supplies of personal protective equipment for their staff.

Response to Homelessness

The City has made responding to the risks that the coronavirus crisis poses to individuals experiencing homelessness a top priority and has worked actively on multiple fronts to address the urgent challenges in this realm. Given the limitation on local resources available to confront these challenges, it has been clear that support from the state to set-up, equip and staff an emergency shelter is needed. The City's effort to convey these needs to the state have resulted in productive conversations.

Recently, the state enacted a plan to hotel space to individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19, do not meet hospital intake requirements and are not able to isolate in their current living conditions. This system includes a medical staffing plan and statewide transportation coverage. Thus far, two sites have been activated, including one in Lexington and are available to accept eligible individuals immediately. The state intends to activate additional hotel and motel locations as needed. This plan addresses the most urgent area of need, and will help mitigate the prospect of widespread transmission within the community.

The City is continuing to work in coordination with key state agencies and partners to develop a local plan to respond to remaining challenges associated with homelessness prompted by the coronavirus crisis, including the need to depopulate current shelter space.

CVS Health Rapid Testing Site

On Tuesday, April 6, 2020, CVS launched operation of a rapid COVID-19 testing site in Lowell, the first of its kind in the state. The drive-through site will offer no-cost testing to Massachusetts residents and will be capable of conducting and processing up to 1,000 tests per day, significantly bolstering the state's testing capacity. The site produces on-the-spot test results which individuals are made aware of before leaving the parking lot. Eligible individuals seeking testing through this site must pre-register for a same-day time slot in advance on the CVS website.

The City actively partnered with CVS and the state to stand-up this site, working to identify an appropriate location, coordinating pertinent logistics, and offering traffic control and 24/7 site security through the Police Department.

This site significantly expands access to testing for Lowell residents. In the initial days since the activation of this site, its expanded testing capacity has accounted for an increase in confirmed cases in the City. A more

accurate assessment of the number of individuals that have been infected is critical to combatting COVID-19 and containing its transmission.

Enforcement of Social Distancing in Public Spaces

Due to widespread reports of individuals not complying with social distancing guidelines at City parks and recreational areas, the Parks Department has blocked-off basketball hoops and removed tennis nets. All city playgrounds were previously closed to the public. Park space remains open to the public for non-congregate activities, including walking and running. The Police Department has incorporated certain spaces that have been identified as hot spots for excessive congregation in their patrols.

City of Lowell Operations

City Hall and all City building remain closed to the public, and non-essential staff are continuing to work remotely. My office remains in constant contact with all departments to ensure continuity of essential services during the observance of these temporary measures. Social distancing protocols have been implement amongst all City of Lowell employees that are still reporting to work. Through a partnership with LowellMakes initiated by the Department of Planning and Development, the City has secured 3-D printed PPE that will be disbursed to DPW employees and others that are occasionally required to work in congregate settings.

Economic Development Response

The City's Office of Economic Development is working actively to respond to the economic impact facing Lowell businesses prompted by the coronavirus crisis. In coordination with the Chamber of Commerce and other stakeholders, the Office has launched a Lowell Business Recovery Task Force. Since the ordered closure of non-essential businesses, the Office has conducted outreach to assess the impacts and needs of local businesses through a business impact survey. The Office also works to compile and publicize resources available to small businesses through the federal relief package and other sources.

First Responder Safety

The City continues to prioritize the safety of first responders given reports of outbreaks within police and fire department around the country. Heightened precautions have been implemented by the Police and Fire Departments, including the sanitation of workspaces and vehicles through the use of industrial cleaning machinery loaned by the school department. Last week, the City signed an MOU with Marriott to provide space to first responders who test positive for coronavirus and need to isolate away for their families. This space will be provided at a low cost on the condition that the City professionally cleans the space following usage.

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. Lowellma.gov/coronavirus is updated daily, and important updates are shared through the City's facebook and twitter accounts. Residents requiring immediate assistance or with questions related to coronavirus should contact the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) which is 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.