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TO: Eileen Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*
FROM: R. Eric Slagle, Director of Development Services
DATE: October 7, 2020

RE: Motion by C. Drinkwater - Req. City Mgr. Provide A Report On “Remote Learning Enrichment Programs” Approved To Operate In The City Pursuant To Governor Baker’s Executive Action (COVID-19 Order No. 49) Allowing For The Creation Of Programs That Will Provide A Supervised Setting During The School Day In Which Children Can Receive Remote Learning Instruction, And On Any Further Actions The City Can Take To Facilitate The Creation Of Remote Learning Enrichment Programs To Support Students And Working Parents.

This memorandum addresses the request from Councilor Drinkwater for a report on Remote Learning Enrichment Programs, which were recently authorized by the Governor.

The Governor issued COVID-19 Order No. 49 on August 28, 2020. That order outlined three new options for supervision and supplemental care for children enrolled in hybrid or remote learning. A detailed description and guidance on all of the options can be found at the following website:
<https://eeclead.force.com/resource/1599624793000/HybridCareOptions>

Of the three options, the new Remote Learning Enrichment Programs place the largest burden on the municipalities to enable their creation and implementation. In concert with Director of Health and Human Services Joanne Belanger, we have reviewed these requirements and have determined the process listed below as the avenue for these programs to be initiated in Lowell.

Here is a list of requirements for a private entity to qualify for a Remote Learning Enrichment Program exemption from the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). These can be found at the following website:
https://eeclead.force.com/apex/EEC_ChildCareEmergencyProgramExemption

To apply for a Remote Learning Enrichment Program exemption, programs must first be approved by a Municipal Approving Authority, which will also be required to monitor the program on an ongoing basis. Approval consists of an approval letter signed by the Municipal Approving Authority, a municipal contact to identify in the application, and a completed attestation from the municipality and program. Please contact your municipality to discuss their specific process for receiving approval.

EEC will review the application and documents and, if the criteria are met, issue an exemption letter. Programs applying for the Remote Learning Enrichment Programs exemption may not operate until they have received an exemption letter from EEC.

If you have any questions or issues, please contact EECExemptions@mass.gov.

Qualifying programs will

- Maintain EEC-established ratios for school aged programming- one adult for every 13 children in a center and 1 adult for every 8 children in a residence
- Maintain stable groups no larger than 26 school aged children in a center and no larger than 8 school aged children in a residence
- Ensure only staff members with appropriate background checks are involved with the care and supervision of children
- Have up to date building inspections
- Follow either EEC or DESE health and safety guidelines

To begin the process with the City of obtaining the required municipal approval, the entity would submit a letter of interest to Development Services, along with an application for a Certificate of Inspection for the proposed location of the program. The letter should include a description of the program, and would include how the program would comply with the following:

- Staff with CPR/First Aid certification
- Reliable internet access
- Ensuring there are spaces available that are free of distraction for remote learning
- Additional learning activities and/or supports for remote learning, including those geared toward children who are academically at risk
- Supports for children with disabilities
- Supports for children with special needs, including English Language Learners and children with IEPs
- Enrichment activities, including those incorporating the arts, physical education, and/or STEM
- Plans for family engagement in students' remote learning success

During the COI process, the entity would be required to provide all of the necessary attestations that the program is eligible to be a Remote Learning Enrichment Program. The minimum operating requirements are listed at the following website:

<https://eeclead.force.com/resource/1600802081000/AuthorizationProcess>

When and if the entity complies with all of the above-listed requirements and obtains a COI, a City staff member will perform a site visit to determine that the program space is appropriate for remote learning. We will be working with the Health Department to create a checklist for this inspection.

If all of the above issues are satisfactory, the City may issue an approval letter and attestation form to the EEC. Afterwards, the City's process would be to respond to complaints, if any, regarding the operation of the facility.

As the Council is aware, this is a brand new, likely temporary process, for entities looking for exemptions to the EEC licensing regime, and so Development Services and Health and Human Services will be working together to both follow and amend this process as necessary. As yet, the City has received no inquiries regarding these programs, but we will process any that do come forward.

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10/07/2020