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Town Manager

TOWN OF  
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**Town Manager's Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update  
March 26, 2020**

As indicated in the attached March 23<sup>rd</sup> Town Manager's Coronavirus (COVID-19) Statement, Governor Baker issued an [Order](#) requiring all businesses and other organizations that do not provide "COVID-19 Essential Services" close their physical workplace and facilities to workers, customers and the public as of 12:00 noon March 24<sup>th</sup> and shall not reopen to workers, customers and the public before 12:00 noon on April 7, 2020 ([Exhibit A – Identifies COVID-19 Essential Services](#)). Additionally, attached please find an [abbreviated summary](#) of the Order.

As a follow-up and in an effort to balance the ability to continue to provide important services and to protect the health and safety of the residents of Watertown, the Town moved forward with additional measures including suspending all construction activity effective 5:00 PM yesterday and that measure reads as follows:

**Construction Activity**

Consistent with the Governor's Order: COVID-19 Essential Services, the Town is suspending all construction activity effective 5:00 PM on Wednesday March 25, 2020, other than work which is being done in response to emergency situations. The Governor's order is clear that essential services are the only activities that should continue until 12:00pm on April 7, 2020. If there are questions regarding whether work is an emergency situation or not within the public right-of-way, the Department of Public Works (617-972-6420; [dpwdept@watertown-ma.gov](mailto:dpwdept@watertown-ma.gov)) will make that determination. The Town's Building Commissioner, Peter McLaughlin (617-972-6480; [pmclaughlin@watertown-ma.gov](mailto:pmclaughlin@watertown-ma.gov)) will make the determination regarding emergency situations in all other matters.

Yesterday, the [attached correspondence](#) was issued from Robert C. Ross, Chief Legal Counsel for Governor Baker to "Municipal Chief Executive Officers" that provides guidance regarding the effect of the Governor's March 23, 2020 Order "Assuring Continued Operation of Essential Services in the Commonwealth, Closing Certain Workplaces, and Prohibiting Gatherings of More than 10 People" insofar as the Order intersects with municipal efforts to address the COVID-19 crisis. This correspondence incorporated the anticipated Commonwealth of Massachusetts COVID-19 Guidelines and Procedures for all Construction Sites and Workers at all Public Work (the "Guidelines") intended to assist in the implementation of the Governor's COVID-19 Order No. 13 "Assuring Continued Operation of Essential Services in the Commonwealth, Closing Certain Workplaces, and Prohibiting Gatherings of More Than 10 People". Subsequent to consultation with the Town's Building Commissioner, the Community Development & Planning Director, the Director of Public Health, the

Fire Chief, the Police Chief and the Director of Administration and Finance with the Department of Public Works, I have determined that the March 23<sup>rd</sup> Town Manager’s Coronavirus COVID-19 Statement may be modified in a manner consistent with the Guidelines and the directives of the Governor. The suspension of construction activity, scheduled to take effect yesterday at 5:00 PM has been lifted with respect to essential construction services as defined by the Governor, provided that such construction services shall be undertaken and conducted in a manner consistent with the Guidelines. The Building Commissioner also plans to ensure that Watertown projects observe a “safety stand-down day” within the next week. This stand-down is designed to ensure all involved workers are familiar with the health safety practices required for the continued operation of Watertown construction projects. Any non-compliance with the Guidelines shall be deemed a violation thereof and shall subject the construction site to an order of suspension until compliance is demonstrated.

The Town of Watertown is equally committed to ensuring the safety and health of our employees providing inspections and supervision of construction activities. We have instituted strict protocols for all Town of Watertown staff inspecting or supervising construction projects.

### **Closure of Schools and Non-Emergency Child Care Programs Extended Until May 4**

Governor Charlie Baker issued an emergency order extending the closure of all public and private schools, and all non-emergency childcare programs, **until May 4** to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth. The School Department will follow up later this week with further information about the implications of this extended closure, but be assured WPS will continue with the excellent plans in place for the Watertown students. For more information, please see the Superintendent's March 25 Update at the following link: <https://www.smores.com/en7t5>, We continue to provide grab and go breakfasts and lunches for any WPS family from 11am-1pm in the faculty parking lot off Broadway Street.

### **Ban of Re-Usable Checkout Bags & Use of Single-Use Plastic Bags**

The Department of Public Health issued a new [Order](#) yesterday to support pharmacies and grocery stores and their employees during the COVID-19 public health emergency. One of the provisions of the Order bans re-usable checkout bags and allows for the use of single-use plastic bags.

### **Watertown Veterans’ Services**

Watertown Veterans’ Services, in partnership with the Greater Boston Veterans’ Collaborative has a detailed spreadsheet with benefits and services—including but not limited to: financial, mental health, transportation, and food resources—available to Veterans and others during this pandemic. The list is constantly being updated and interested Veterans and families should contact Patrick George, Veterans’ Services Officer (VSO) for the most up to date list. Please contact the VSO at: [PGeorge@watertown-ma.gov](mailto:PGeorge@watertown-ma.gov) or (617) 972-6416 (Office) and (781) 645-9127 (Cell).

### **Emergency Management Team**

The Town of Watertown Emergency Management Team is meeting daily to monitor the developments in the outbreak of the coronavirus. We have used these meetings to keep an organized flow of information and to develop strategies to best respond to the needs of our community. We will continue to update the community through the Watertown Health Department’s web page. <https://www.watertown-ma.gov/965/CORONAVIRUS>.

We also recommend the following resources:

Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Resource Page:  
<https://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus>

Center for Disease Control COVID-19 information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

[March 13<sup>th</sup> Town Manager's Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Statement](#)

[March 16<sup>th</sup> Town Manager's Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Statement](#)

[March 23<sup>rd</sup> Town Manager's Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Statement](#)

**We are in this together**

We are living in an unprecedented time where our world, our nation and our community, is faced with the threat of an international pandemic known as COVID-19.

All of our Town employees are incredibly committed to ensuring the Town can safely meet the needs of our community while we are also protecting our employees' safety. All departments have implemented vigorous social distancing and hygiene protocols. I am so grateful for all of our employees' efforts under difficult circumstances.

The members of the Honorable Town Council continue to be available to help all residents and to provide updates/information to protect the health and safety of all the residents of Watertown.

I want to thank all of the members of our community for your cooperation and efforts to date; and for your continued actions to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Watertown is a resilient community and we are all in this together. We will continue to support each other and stay strong, Watertown Strong!