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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – MARCH 13, 2020 DAILY BRIEFING

WELLESLEY MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS WILL OPERATE WITH LIMITED PUBLIC ACCESS

The Town of Wellesley continues to undertake all possible measures to protect the health and safety of our community and help slow the spread of Coronavirus. The Wellesley Health Department (WHD) is currently monitoring six cases of COVID-19 among Wellesley residents – one confirmed case and five presumptive positive cases.

All of these individuals are isolated at home according to Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) protocol and in daily contact with WHD. We recognize the anxiety in the community surrounding COVID-19 and are committed to full transparency in updating this information every day. Detailed guidance on [Isolation due to COVID-19](#) and [Quarantine due to COVID-19](#) is provided by MDPH.

In addition, guidance and information about COVID-19 is available on the MDPH [COVID-19 Quarantine and Monitoring website](#). The State is also providing detailed information and support, available in many languages, through the [Massachusetts emergency 211 line](#).

Following direction from Governor Charlie Baker and State officials, the Town of Wellesley will be making a number of changes to Town programs, activities, and access to municipal buildings in an effort to keep residents and Town employees healthy and safe.

Effective on Saturday, March 14, all **Wellesley Free Library** (WFL) buildings will be closed to the public for two weeks. At this time, the buildings are expected to reopen on Monday, March 30 (*this date may change.*) The Hills and Fells Branch Libraries will be completely closed. Main Library staff will be providing the following services:

- Phone service on Monday – Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Curbside pick-up on Monday – Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- The Virtual Branch (all website resources including e-books, databases, streaming, etc.) will continue to be available 24/7
- The Library Wakelin Room will be open for voting on March 17

Please hold on to any Library donations; these will not be accepted during the closure. Please check the WFL website for information and updates. <https://www.wellesleyfreelibrary.org/>

Effective on Saturday, March 14, the **Wellesley Recreation Department** will postpone all programs, classes, rentals and events until further notice. <https://wellesleyma.gov/Recreation>

Due to COVID-19 concerns, the **Wellesley Recycling and Disposal Facility** (RDF) will be making the following changes in policies and schedules, effective on Saturday, March 14:

- Walk-in services to the Scale House office are limited; please mail in permit applications, email rdf@wellesleyma.gov; or call 781-235-7600 ext. 3345
- Reusables Area (“Take and Leave”) opening day is postponed until further notice
- A portable toilet is provided for public use; the Scale House restroom will be closed to the public

- Hours of Operation:
Residential Hours remain unchanged
Commercial Scale Hours are:
Monday – Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and Saturday, 7:00 a.m. – 10 a.m.

Until further notice, all residents are encouraged to not congregate at the RDF while recycling and use proper hygiene to help protect the health and safety of all users.

As Wellesley's first responders are critical to protecting our community, effective immediately the **Wellesley Police Department** will be suspending certain services and changing policies to help keep officers safe and healthy. Detailed information about these changes is available on the Wellesley Police Department website. <https://wellesleyma.gov/892/Police>

Also, when responding to calls at homes and buildings, **the Wellesley Fire and Rescue Department** may ask residents pre-screened questions regarding potential illnesses before entering. These questions are not invasive and are intended to keep both residents and first responders safe.

As a reminder, the Health Department is urging residents to be honest about any health status with anyone who may need to enter a residence, including Town Building Inspectors, Public Works personnel, postal workers, delivery service providers (UPS, Amazon, grocery delivery services, etc.) and others.

Wellesley Police Officers and Fire Department Officers will continue to respond to emergency calls for service without delay. If you have an emergency, dial 911 and officers will respond as always!

Wellesley Town Hall will remain open to the public through Tuesday, March 17, 2020, to allow for absentee ballot voting and daily business. [Local town elections](#) will take place on Tuesday, March 17 as scheduled. Beginning on Wednesday, March 18, there will be no public access to Town Hall until Monday, March 30 or later. All Town Hall staff will continue to report to work and will be available to respond to any questions, offer assistance and provide [services](#) by email and phone by calling 781-431-1019, and following the prompts.

We are urging all residents, contractors, retailers and others to conduct Town business through our online platforms. Wellesley offers [online payment options](#) for parking tickets, real estate taxes, personal property taxes, excise taxes, utility bills, dog licensing, building permits, and licensing fees. Yard/garage/event sale permits are suspended at this time to prevent large groups of individuals congregating in our community.

A locked drop-box is also located in front of Town Hall (at the entrance facing Washington Street) where payments, absentee ballots, and other Town Hall correspondence may be dropped off. This box is checked regularly throughout each business day.

The Governor has modified the State's Open Meeting Law. As such, Town officials are working to implement remote meeting platforms and participation beginning as early as Monday, March 16. Please check meeting agendas on the Town of Wellesley website for meeting information, remote access and participation guidelines.

Wellesley Public Schools remain closed for the next two weeks. Please see the message below from Superintendent of Public Schools Dr. David Lussier:

Dear WPS Families and Staff,

To say that these are uncertain times would be an understatement. Our announcement yesterday that the Wellesley Public Schools would be closed for approximately two weeks is an unprecedented action and one that reflects the seriousness with which our community is taking the COVID-19 pandemic.

While school is not in session, I want to remind everyone to follow the guidance from the Wellesley Department of Health regarding the importance of following protocols for personal protection and prevention, as well as to lower the risk of transmission of illness to others. Please remember the importance of social and personal distancing and to avoid large gatherings.

Our principals and senior administrators met throughout the day today to continue planning for the transitional period we have now entered. We recognize that there are many questions from our staff and families that range from issues of pay and work expectations to the parameters of remote learning options for students. We have already begun to work with our educator and staff unions on jointly answering many of these questions and I appreciate their thought partnership in navigating these complex issues. Similarly, our work to offer learning opportunities for our students during this transition is well underway, which we hope to finalize early next week for implementation on Thursday.

We also understand that the WPS closure may impact some members of our community more than others. In particular, we are concerned about students who rely on schools for free and reduced meals. We have worked with Whitsons School Nutrition to develop essential services for students to have access to breakfast and lunch during this closure. If you would like to order breakfast and/or lunch for the week of March 16th through 20th, please click on this [link](#) to make your meal selections before 7 AM on the day you would like to order. Pre-ordering for the week is encouraged. Ordered meals can be picked up at the Wellesley Middle School (side entrance by the loading dock off D'Auria Drive) between 12 Noon and 1:30 PM daily. We are working with community partners to offer delivery of meals to the Wellesley Housing Authority on a daily basis. A second order form will be available next week for ordering meals during the week of March 23rd through March 27th.

Please contact the Whitsons Food Service Department at 781-446-6250 – for Matt Delaney (extension 5708) or for Sue (extension 5707) for any special requests.

Our Boston resident students will be able to access the City of Boston food resources: <https://www.boston.gov/departments/food-access>

As we move into next week, we will continue to provide updates on all aspects of our operations. In the meantime, please continue to take care of yourselves and each other.

Best regards,

Dr. David Lussier

Superintendent of Schools

Throughout the weekend, Town and School officials will continue to evaluate and refine these measures and provide updates as necessary. We are confident and well-prepared to address the needs of our entire community going forward.

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