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MARCH 14, 2020 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

POLLING PLACES WILL BE OPEN FOR ELECTIONS ON MARCH 17, BUILDINGS REMAIN CLOSED TO PROGRAMMING

The Town of Wellesley continues to evaluate operations on a daily basis to protect our community during the Coronavirus outbreak. Currently, the number of cases of COVID-19 in Wellesley is stable – one confirmed case and five presumed positive cases. No new cases in Wellesley have been identified since Thursday, March 12.

The Town is closing schools, programs, and buildings to limit exposure and to create social distancing. It is recommended that during this time, people maintain a distance of 6 feet separation, continually wash hands, and practice good respiratory hygiene. Social distancing can be an effective way of slowing the spread of a virus if it is done well and performed community wide.

At this time, Wellesley's Local Elections will take place as scheduled on Tuesday, March 17. Municipal elections can only be postponed with a court order, or by declaration of the Secretary of State. As of March 11, 2020, the Secretary of State has requested emergency election powers from the State legislature. The emergency authority being sought by Secretary of State William Galvin would include the power to postpone an election or move a voting location in the case of an emergency. Wellesley is one of the first municipalities in Massachusetts to hold a municipal election following Governor Baker's state of emergency declaration on March 10, 2020. The option to postpone is currently not available.

In consultation with the Wellesley Health Department (WHD) and following [election guidance](#) provided from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), on Election Day special measures will be in place to protect the health and safety of all voters and election workers.

Effective today, March 14, the Wellesley Free Libraries, the Tolles Parsons Center, the Recreation Department, and Wellesley Public Schools are closed, and programming is canceled for the next two weeks. However, voting locations in all Town buildings and schools, including the Shipley Center at Dana Hall School, will be open on Election Day from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Town custodial staff will complete frequent cleaning of all high-traffic surface areas at voting locations and gloves will be provided to all election workers. Voters are encouraged to practice social distancing, bring their own hand-sanitizer and/or gloves, and may bring their own black felt-tipped pens (no Sharpies). **If you are not feeling well, please remain at home on Election Day.**

Also, Absentee Voting over the counter will be available in the Town Clerk's office at Wellesley Town Hall until 12 Noon on Monday, March 16. Voters with Absentee Ballots may return them to the Clerk's office or may return ballots to the drop-box in front of Town Hall by 8 p.m. on March 17.

Election Night coverage will be provided by Wellesley Media beginning at 7:30 p.m. on March 17.

Town officials continue to tighten restrictions for government meetings. All non-essential meetings remain canceled and many mandatory meetings are moving to online platforms. The public is encouraged to provide comments in advance of any meetings by email. Please check meeting agendas on the Town of Wellesley website for updated meeting information.

Also, Town officials are evaluating plans for Wellesley's 2020 Annual Town Meeting that is scheduled to begin on Monday, March 30. Officials are in discussion with the Town Moderator and will address Town Meeting issues in the coming week.

We want to remind everyone in our community that while our buildings may be closed and programming is temporarily suspended, Town officials and staff, public safety officers and first responders are working and are available to answer questions, provide services and offer any assistance residents may need. Please visit the [Town of Wellesley website](#) or call 781-431-1019 for information.

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