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PUBLIC HEALTH WEEKLY UPDATE:
COVID-19
May 22, 2020

Below is a summary related to the Town of Belmont's response to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. The Town of Belmont is committed to providing information including this weekly update on the COVID-19 situation. Numbers related to COVID-19 and other pertinent information are updated daily on the Town's website.

The Town of Belmont currently has 214 confirmed cases of COVID-19. There are now a total of 60 COVID-19 related deaths in the Town of Belmont, 57 of which are confirmed by filed death certificates with the Town Clerk's Office and 3 are *unconfirmed*.

Daily updates on COVID-19 and local cases will continue to be posted on the Town of Belmont's COVID-19 webpage.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) is providing weekly reports of COVID-19 data by city or town as part of its Dashboard for COVID-19 Cases, Quarantine and Monitoring. MDPH will update this list once a week on Wednesdays.

Governor Baker's reopening plan: Phase 1

On May 18th Governor Baker announced a plan to slowly begin *Reopening Massachusetts* businesses and industries. This update included specific information about which businesses will be allowed to re-open and when under Phase 1 of the Reopening Plan. Below is a summary of the Reopening Plan.

Businesses and organizations that can operate under Phase 1:

- COVID-19 Essential services have been allowed to operate prior to first phase of reopening. Currently operating essential businesses may continue to operate, but must come into compliance with new workplace safety standards (see below) by **May 25.**

- In addition, the businesses and organizations listed in the table below will be permitted to resume operations on May 18 or May 25. All other businesses and workplaces

remain closed through Phase 1. No business is required to re-open and may not reopen until it is ready.

May 18	May 25
• Essential businesses already operating must comply with applicable standards and self-certify by May 25. • Manufacturing • Construction • Places of worship (40% occupancy limit)	• Laboratories and life sciences facilities • Offices limited to < 25% maximum occupancy; work from home strongly encouraged. • Car Washes (exterior and self-service only) • Hair salons/barber shops (by appointment only) • Pet grooming by appointment (curbside drop-off and pick-up) • Certain outdoor recreational facilities and activities • Retail (curbside pickup or remote fulfillment only)

- All operating businesses must comply with general mandatory workplace safety standards, as well as sector-specific workplace standards and protocols where applicable. Note that some specific sector and workplace standards and protocols are mandatory (actions that "must" be taken), while others are best practice guidance (actions that "should" be taken).

You can find more information about when other businesses and organizations will be able to reopen here: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-when-can-my-business-reopen

Enforcement of Workplace Safety Standards

Only essential services and businesses specifically designated for reopening can operate in Phase 1. In order to open or continue operation, all businesses/organizations must:

- Develop a written COVID-19 safety plan outlining how the business/organization will prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Self-certify that it will operate in compliance with all applicable and mandatory workplace safety standards. Templates are available here.
- Produce this self-certification, if requested, by the local board of health, DLS or DPH. Failure or refusal to produce the self-certification upon request is grounds for enforcement action.

You can find additional documentation to assist you in compliance here: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-massachusetts#general-business-guidance-

If you would like more information on the Massachusetts Reopening, please see the attached Reopening Massachusetts Plan document, or visit the Reopening Massachusetts website here: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-massachusetts

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Please note at this time Town buildings will remain closed to the public, but staff can be reached by phone or email during normal business hours.

Belmont's Annual Local Election – June 23, 2020 – Vote By Mail

The Select Board voted to postpone Belmont's annual local election from April 7th to June 23rd, 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Massachusetts Legislature and Governor have temporarily expanded the acceptable reasons for voting absentee to include any person taking precaution related to Covid-19.

Town Clerk, Ellen O'Brien Cushman, encourages people who want to vote in the local election to consider doing so by mail. Voting in person will be different with social distancing protocols and other safety measures in place to protect Belmont's election workers and voters. Ideally most people who want to vote in the local election will do so by mail to limit exposure. Voters choosing absentee voting must submit a written signed request to receive ballots by mail.

It is easy to sign up for ballots to be mailed to you by using the application form or writing a letter.

- Requests for absentee ballots must be in writing and signed
- Link to application: http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elepdf/absentee/English-Absentee-Ballot-Application.pdf
- Completed, signed requests may be submitted to the drop box outside of Town Hall (parking lot level), US Mail (Town Clerk, P.O. Box 56, Belmont, MA 02478), fax (617-993-2601), or email (mpiccione@belmont-ma.gov).
- You may request ballots for all elections remaining in 2020: 6/23 Belmont Local Election, 9/1 Massachusetts State Primary and 11/3 Presidential Election.
- Apply early. All absentee ballots are counted every election.
- Town Clerk's webpage with more details: https://www.belmont-ma.gov/town-clerk/pages/elections-absentee-voting-early-voting
- Questions? Email to townclerk@belmont-ma.gov or leave a voicemail at 617-993-2603.

Belmont Food Pantry

BELMONT FOOD PANTRY HOURS

The Food Pantry will be **OPEN** on a limited basis for **June** & **July** from **8:30–10:00 am** for Belmont residents to receive food or to drop off donations. The pantry will **NOT** be open on any other days.

SATURDAY, JUNE 6TH
SATURDAY, JUNE 20TH
SATURDAY, JULY 11TH
SATURDAY, JULY 25TH

GO TO OUR WEBSITE/FACEBOOK PAGE FOR CONTINUED UPDATES
https://sites.google.com/site/thebelmontfoodpantry/
https://www.facebook.com/BFPantry/

The Belmont Food Pantry will be open to distribute food from 8:30 – 10:00 a.m. on the dates listed above. The distribution will still be a drive-thru with everyone remaining in their car, pulling up to the volunteer to check in and another volunteer will put the bag(s), per family, into the car. Walkers PLEASE keep a distance from each other and Food Pantry volunteers WILL COME to you. Belmont residents who are coming to receive food, please remember to bring your ID and have it ready before you get to the check in. Click here for the application and instructions: https://sites.google.com/…/thebelmont…/home/new-client-forms

COVID-19 Testing

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) originally restricted the availability of COVID-19 testing to individuals with symptoms (i.e. cough, sore throat, fever, chills, fatigue, headache, recent loss of sense of taste or smell, shortness of breath) consistent with the virus. As more test kits have been made available to providers, MDPH is now expanding its COVID-19

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testing categories to now include those who are close contacts to someone that has recently tested positive and those that work with individuals that have tested positive. Close contacts, with or without symptoms, should be tested as soon as possible after they are notified of their exposure to COVID-19.

Community wide testing
Cambridge and Somerville have recently gained attention for announcing plans for community wide COVID-19 testing, which has been made possible because of their preexisting partnership with the Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA). CHA is an academic community healthcare system that specifically serves the medical needs of Cambridge, Somerville, Everett, Malden, and Revere. Residents that live within CHA's service area have access to community testing.

Drive-through testing events have been held in other nearby communities, these events are conducted by for-profit entities. At this time the Town of Belmont does not have the resources to hold a community wide testing event on its own.

Additionally, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) is only recommending community wide testing for densely populated municipalities such as the ones listed above.

MDPH has informed local health officials throughout the state that COVID-19 testing is available to anyone, without prior approval from a medical provider, at a number of different Community Health Centers located throughout the state. The Community Health Center closest to Belmont is:

Cambridge Health Alliance – East Cambridge Care Center
163 Gore Street
Cambridge, MA 02141
(617) 665-3000

You must call ahead of time to schedule a time for testing.

A list of testing site located throughout the state can be found here:
https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-testing#testing-sites

Antibody testing
MDPH does not recommend antibody (serology) testing for the general public at this time. Questions remain about the quality of individual test types, as well as the timing of COVID antibody development and duration. MDPH recommends that individuals who do decide to get an antibody (serology) test, get a PCR test at the same time, unless they have results available from previous PCR testing. Residents who pursue antibody (serology) testing should understand that a positive serology result without an accompanying PCR test will lead to the individual being isolated, and their contacts being quarantined, even if the individual had symptoms weeks or months in the past but was not able to be tested.

Face Coverings: Now required per Order of the Governor

Governor Baker's *COVID-19 Order No. 31* went into effect throughout the Commonwealth on May 6th and requires all individuals over the age of 2 to wear face coverings in public places where physical distancing is not possible. This applies to both indoor and outdoor spaces such as, but not limited to, grocery stores, pharmacies, laundromats, home improvement stores, banks,

government buildings, and restaurant pick-up sites. However, it should be noted that there are exceptions to this Order, as it does not apply to children under the age of two (2) and those unable to wear a mask or face covering due to a medical condition*.

On May 11th, the Belmont Board of Health and the Belmont Select Board updated Temporary Emergency Regulation #2 to include language for fines in line with the Governor's Order.

A violation of this Order and local Regulation may result in a fine of up to $300.

*Please note: There are many disabilities that are invisible and you may not know why someone is not wearing a face covering. The Town asks that you do not confront people about wearing masks. If you are uncomfortable about being near someone who does not have a mask on, please consider walking away or around them from a safe distance.

This is a challenging time for everyone and we appreciate your continued compliance as we all work together to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and look forward to safely reopening businesses.

Please visit the CDC's website to learn more about its recommendation for face coverings.
The CDC has also posted information on how to make your own face covering.

You may also contact Belmont Helps to request a mask.

Face Coverings for Senior Citizens

The Beech Street Center has a limited supply of face coverings available to provide to senior citizens in Belmont. Senior citizens may contact the Beech Street Center to request either handmade washable cloth masks, or disposable masks.

Please be advised that as of Tuesday, April 28th, the Town has mandated use of masks at essential business; please further be advised that any contactless transitions occurring outside the center, including meals, also require you to wear a mask.

Please note that your call will be answered and Beech Street Center staff will respond to your request within 48 hours. To make your mask requests, please call the main number at 617-993-2970 or email dleavitt@belmont-ma.gov .

Beech Street Center

Nava Niv-Vogel, Director of the Council on Aging, wishes to remind the community that staff at the Beech Street Center are available to help residents of all ages to access essential services during the pandemic.

Due to growing national concern that people are waiting too long to seek out medical treatment over fears of catching COVID-19, potentially contributing to poor health outcomes, all residents are reminded to always call their primary care physicians and/or other medical specialists for advice regarding ANY medical issue, even if it is not related to COVID-19.

Staff at the Beech Street Center can be reached at (617) 993-2970.

Emotional Health Resources

During stressful times it is common to have worries about yourself or a loved one. If you have questions about the types of treatment available, please contact Health Department Social Worker Janet Amdur at jamdur@belmont-ma.gov or (617) 993-2983.

Please remember to take care of your emotional health and help others to do the same. If you need emotional help please also consider making use of the following resources:

- Call 2-1-1 and choose the "**CALL2TALK**" option. (Please note that 2-1-1 call center has recently been operating on approximately a 90-minute delay for responses.)
- The **Samaritans** helpline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call or text their helpline any time at 1-877-870-4673.
- The **Disaster Distress Helpline**, 1-800-985-5990, is a national hotline, which also operates 24/7, to provide immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human caused disaster, including disease outbreaks like COVID-19. This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States and its territories.
- The **Beech Street Center** is a local resource in Belmont that can help senior citizens address a variety of needs and access to social services.

Belmont Helps: Ways to Help Our Community

Donate | Volunteer | Ask for Help | Find Resources | Request or Help Sew Masks

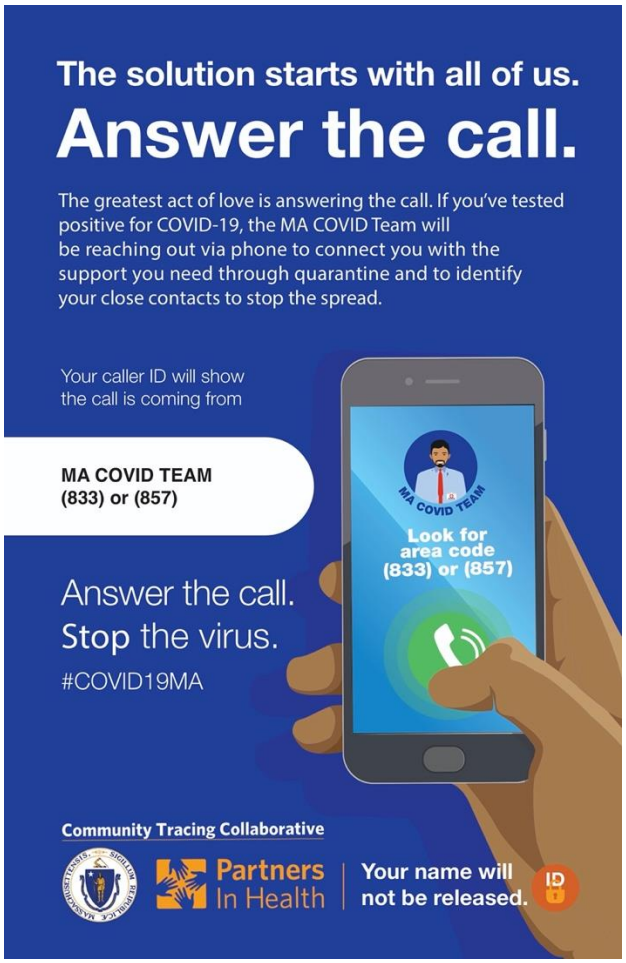
Belmont Helps, a Winn Brook Parent Teacher Association Committee, is a 100% volunteer organization founded on March 14, 2020 to connect Belmont area community members in need during the COVID-19 outbreak to resources and volunteers. More information can be found at www.belmonthelps.org. Contact belmonthelps@gmail.com or leave a message at (617) 993-0162 for a call back from a team member.

Medical Reserve Corps: *A Call for Volunteers*

The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), is a national network of volunteers under the US Department of Health and Human Services. The Metro East MRC is the regional unit based out of the Arlington Health Department that is charged with serving 18 communities, including Belmont. There is currently a high demand for Metro East MRC volunteers to help with the local and regional response to the COVID-19 crisis. Volunteers have been activated to assist with delivering food and medications, staffing call centers, and providing backflow to medical facilities in the region. Interested volunteers should sign up at www.MAResponds.org by selecting "Metro East MRC" as their organization. Medical volunteers are also encouraged to join the "COVID-19 Response" team via MA Responds. Please contact **Mia Nardini**, Metro East MRC Coordinator, at 781-316-3177 or MetroEastMRC@Town.Arlington.MA.US with any questions.

Contact Tracing: Answer the Call

To help reduce the spread of the virus, Belmont is participating in the Massachusetts COVID-19 Community Tracing Collaborative (CTC) program.



What is contact tracing?
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is collaborating with Partners in Health (PIH) to contact every resident that tests positive for COVID-19. Public health officials from PIH and/or the local board of health will speak with infected individuals and help identify a list of **close contacts*** that they may have had an interaction with in the 48-hour period before their start of symptoms, or the two days prior to the test that led to a positive result for individuals who do not have symptoms.

Once close contacts are identified, public health officials will begin reaching out to individuals on the list of contacts to notify them about the exposure to an infected individual (who will not be identified) and to also provide them with direction about a 14-day quarantine period and instruction on self-monitoring for symptoms. Contact tracers or local board of health officials then will check in with individuals to monitor symptoms and needs throughout the duration of the quarantine period.

If an individual develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while in quarantine, they will need to notify public health staff, and remain in isolation until symptoms resolve. Contact tracing will then begin on behalf of this individual as well.

*MDPH defines a **close contact** as someone that has being within approximately 6-feet of a known COVID-19 case for about 15 minutes.

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Why is contact tracing important?
People in close contact with someone infected with a virus such as COVID-19 are at higher risk for becoming infected themselves and of potentially infecting others. Contract tracing finds possible new cases quickly so that they can be isolated to help stop further spread of the virus.

Sign up to work as a contact tracer for the state
Partners in Health (PIH) is hiring Contact Tracers, Resource Coordinators, and Case Investigators for outreach to all Massachusetts contacts of COVID-19 patients. These positions are essential for providing COVID-19 contacts with critical information about testing and quarantine, referrals for testing, and to provide support resources during the quarantine period.

Learn more about contact tracing opportunities by visiting the PIH website.

Grocery stores

On April 7th, the Department of Public Health released further guidance to promote social distancing at grocery stores. The new guidance requires that each grocery store limit occupancy to 40% of its maximum permitted occupancy level. It also sets out procedures by which staff should monitor occupancy levels. You can find the new guidance here: https://www.mass.gov/doc/order-grocery-stores-40-percent/download

Things to keep in mind when you go to the grocery store:

- Follow guidance posted in store and instructions from grocery store staff on social distancing
- Only send one person per family, leave children and other families members at home if at all possible
- Buy enough to extend how long you can go until your next trip, but don't buy up too many of one
- particular item
- Shop at an off-peak time if possible. In the morning before 10 or 11 am tends to be the busiest time in many area stores at the moment
- **Wear a face covering!**

Remember that it is possible that you may be contagious even if you don't feel sick. Your fellow shoppers and hardworking grocery store employees are depending on you to make the best possible choices to keep them safe.

Belmont COVID-19 Informational Call Center and Email

For general COVID-19 questions not specific to the Town of Belmont, all Massachusetts residents encouraged to call the state's 2-1-1 hotline that is staffed by operators 24/7 and with translators available in multiple languages. Residents with questions can dial 2-1-1 from any landline or cellphone or use the live chat option on the on the Mass 2-1-1 website.

The Town of Belmont has also established a call center to allow residents to ask non-medical questions specific to COVID-19 in Belmont. The call center will be staffed Monday through Friday from 8am to 4pm the number for the call center is (617) 993-2222. Questions can also be emailed to: belmonteoc@belmont-ma.gov .

Please call 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency. Calls should not be made to 9-1-1 to obtain information about COVID-19

Belmont Public Schools

The Superintendent will post regular updates for parents and students in the Belmont Public Schools News section of its webpage.

What's open and what's closed

Statewide:

- All **public and private elementary and secondary schools** throughout the Commonwealth will be closed for the remainder of this school year with distancing learning continuing through the last day of school in June.
- Effective March 23rd, all **public and private daycare providers** will be closed. The Commonwealth will establish Exempt Emergency Child Care Programs to provide priority service for families of emergency personnel, medical staff, and others critical to confronting COVID-19.
- All **restaurants and bars** are prohibited from on-premise consumption of food. However, these food establishments may remain open for now to provide food through take-out or delivery service.
- To learn more about what types of businesses are allowed to continue operations during this time, please refer to the Commonwealth's COVID-19 Essential Services FAQs

Belmont:

- All Town of Belmont **public playgrounds and fields** (including all basketball, tennis, and pickleball courts) are closed.
- **Field use** permits are suspended until further notice.
- **Public meetings and hearings** will be limited to allow for essential business to be conducted.
- **Town Hall Offices, the Belmont Public Library,** and the **Beech Street Center buildings** are closed to the public until further notice. Staff in these offices are available to assist residents with questions and/or concerns. Residents in need of assistance are encouraged to contact respective Town departments by phone and/or email www.belmont-ma.gov .
- Important updates about COVID-19 and its impact on the Town will be posted at www.belmont-ma.gov .