

Mayor Domenic J. Sarno's City of Springfield COVID-19 Situational Update

Friday, February 19, 2021

Mayor Domenic J. Sarno, in the best interests of our residents and business community, continues his daily morning meetings with his cabinet heads as they work 24/7 to facilitate and coordinate with all of our local, state, federal, and public and private partners in response to the COVID-19 situation.

Below are the most recent updates as reported from each City Departments.

Mayor's Office

- Continues to coordinate the city's efforts with all stakeholders (state, federal, hospital and medical facilities, public and private partners, etc.) in response of services and relief and recovery measures
- Continuing to monitor the COVID-19 situation closely so that as the city continues with phased reopening aspects
- Continues to stress the need for additional target testing in order to build strong public, business, consumer, and hospital confidences to identify, isolate, contact trace, mitigate and heal potential hot spot areas
- City Hall and all municipal buildings have reopened, by appointment only and with additional restrictions, as part of the city's Phased reopening plans
 - Temperature checks and face coverings needed to enter city buildings to proactively protect and preserve our workforce
 - Continuing to encourage residents and businesses to conduct city related business by phone or through the city's website
- Continues to coordinate with cabinet and department heads on reopening aspects of all municipal buildings
- Heartfelt thank you to our Springfield Community for stepping up with PPE donations, allowing the city to outfit our dedicated police, fire and frontline workers with the appropriate safety equipment
- Governor Baker announced new initiatives to mitigate the spread of COVID-19
 - Issued Travel Order for all travelers entering Massachusetts that took effect on August 1st
 - Current list of lower-risk states include: Hawaii, North Dakota, Puerto Rico
 - Stop the Spread initiative extended until March 31, 2021
- Baker-Polito Administration announce new COVID-19 public health measures and protocols

- Announced new risk measurement system for designating at risk communities
- COVID-19 vaccines are being distributed across the country
- City first responders started to receive COVID-19 vaccine January 11, 2021
 - 1,400 vaccine shots have been given to city first responders
 - Mayor Sarno looks forward to leading by example and taking the vaccine as soon as he is able
- Governor Baker announced that the Eastfield Mall will serve as a COVID-19 vaccination site starting Friday, January 29, 2021
- State health officials have moved up seniors aged 65 and older in their priority COVID vaccine rollout plan. Now part of group to receive shots in second wave of Phase II
- Governor Baker updates the states COVID-19 precautionary measures
 - Effective Monday, February 8, 2021, businesses can operate at 40% capacity
- Mayor Sarno, Chairman of the Board of Assessors Richie Allen, and Collector/Treasure Christopher Caputo remind residents to be mindful of the due dates as tax bills are mailed out. Encourages residents to conduct city related business online if possible.
- Baker-Polito Administration announce vaccine appointments for individuals ages 65+, and individuals with 2+ certain medical conditions to begin on February 18th, 2021
- Mayor Sarno joined with Dr. Mark Keroack of Baystate Health, Dr. Robert Roose of Mercy Medical, and State Senator Eric Lesser for a Town Hall discussion on WWLP 22 News
 - The 90 minute program ran during 22 News 5pm – 6:30pm timeslot
 - The discussion included dialogue about the city, state, and national response to the pandemic and insight from two of the areas medical professionals

Health

- City of Springfield's weekly COVID-19 cases:
 - Week of November 8: 697
 - Week of November 15th: 632
 - Week of November 22nd: 675
 - Week of November 29th: 1,168
 - Week of December 6th: 1,033
 - Week of December 13th: 957
 - Week of December 20st: 866
 - Week of December 27th: 910
 - Week of January 3, 2021: 1,177
 - Week of January 10, 2021: 1,043
 - Week of January 17, 2021: 952
 - Week of January 24, 2021: 911
 - Week of January 31, 2021: 638
 - Week of February 7, 2021: 531
- Total positive cases: 16,748
 - State has begun reporting probable new cases in addition to confirmed cases
 - 209 deaths of Springfield residents related to COVID-19
 - State has reclassified the 'causes of death' for prior deaths which may not have been attributed to COVID-19 related conditions and underlying health symptoms
 - 59 deaths reported from long term care facilities
 - 150 residential deaths
 - Ethnic breakdown of deaths:
 - 86 White – 41.1%

- 46 Black – 22%
 - 69 Hispanic – 33%
 - 7 Asian – 3%
- 74% of positive cases are under the age of 50 (as of February 16, 2021)
 - 42% are under the age of 30
 - 32% are between the age of 31-50
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) has listed Springfield as high-risk (Red) for COVID-19 cases
- Continues to monitor potential COVID-19 cluster locations across the city
- Continues to monitor stores and locations, and reviewing compliance with the Governor’s public health order for face coverings and reopening aspects. Commissioner Caulton-Harris continues to personally visit a number of stores and locations
 - Health Department will focus outreach in zip codes with significant high positive COVID-19 cases
- Commissioner Caulton-Harris through the City of Springfield Board of Health issued Regulation on Face Coverings
 - Mandating face coverings for all persons (with exceptions) to wear a face covering while out in public and where social distancing is not possible
 - Requirements for businesses to adhere to the regulation
 - Law enforcement and public health officials will enforce regulation
- Mayor Sarno and HHS Commissioner Caulton-Harris continue to push and work with the state, local hospitals and healthcare facilities with community health outreach aspects to do much more symptomatic and asymptomatic testing, not only for homeless population, but for all targets
- Continuing with contact tracing aspects
- Announced the continued need and importance of adhering to all public health, personal hygiene and social distancing procedures. Still very important, even though hospitalization numbers are stable, public health is population based and community spread of the virus is still prevalent
- Homeless Triage facilities and operations – results showed tactical strategy worked
 - Total population tested - 189 individuals
 - 12 positives / 6.34%
 - Partnership with Baystate Health for testing at city’s Homeless Triage Facility
 - Partnership with Mercy Medical for testing at the Salvation Army and Springfield Rescue Mission – Taylor Street and Mill Street site
- Last day of service for homeless triage facility was Saturday, June 13, 2020
- Homeless triage tenting facility was taken down July 30, 2020
 - Friends of the Homeless have worked with the city to establish a plan for the transition
- Friends of the Homeless and the City have tested 36 individuals at the shelter with only 1 positive – as of November 2, 2020
- City of Springfield team collaborated with Mercy Hospital for testing of the homeless population in the Western Massachusetts region in the City of Northampton and the Town of Amherst – 172 individuals tested
- Continuing to review city’s phased reopening plan
- City of Springfield COVID-19 hotline - (413) 750-3250
- As part of the Commonwealth’s Stop the Spread initiative the City of Springfield and the state Department of Public Health, in partnership with AFC Urgent Care, Tapestry Health, Baystate Health, AMR, and Fallon EMS held additional free testing sites across the city

- America Medical Response joined the Commonwealth’s Stop the Spread initiative by offering additional free COVID-19 testing in Springfield at the Eastfield Mall.
 - AMR has tested over 20,000 Springfield residents
- Stop the Spread initiative extended into 2021 with AMR
- Governor Baker announced that the Commonwealth would revert to Step 1 of Phase 3.
 - The City of Springfield has remained at Step 1 of Phase 3
- Governor Charlie Baker announced a new series of COVID-19 restrictions aimed to help prevent another spike of Coronavirus cases.
 - The new restrictions include: reducing capacity limits to 25% for most industries
 - Governor Baker extended the capacity limits until February 8, 2021
- Mayor Sarno and HHS Commissioner Helen Caulton-Harris announce the ‘Vax Force’ – a 15 member COVID-19 Vaccine Education Committee
 - The mission of the committee will be to provide credible COVID-19 resources to the citizens of Springfield using science, data, and information to guide the decision-making and explain the vaccination process, in layman’s terms
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts launches website for info and phased distribution plan for COVID-19 vaccine
- Mayor Sarno and HHS Commissioner Helen Caulton-Harris continue to work to expand COVID-19 vaccine sites across the city
 - Working to secure additional volumes of vaccines to distribute
 - Working with the state and local partners to securing neighborhood vaccine sites throughout the city
- Mayor Sarno and HHS Commission Caulton-Harris announced that the City libraries and Department of Elder Affairs will offer assistance and support for seniors to sign up for the COVID-19 vaccine at the Eastfield Mall
- Mayor Sarno, HHS Commissioner Caulton-Harris, State Representative Bud Williams announce that AMR will hold COVID-19 testing sites in our neighborhoods
 - Mason Square Old Hill and Upper Hill at Rebecca Johnson School
 - Additional testing site to open at Putnam Vocational High School
 - Other testing locations throughout the city pending
- City of Springfield, through the Office of Health and Human Services, Elder Affairs and Library, has assisted over 2,400 seniors with signing up for the COVID-19 vaccine
- CVS at 1242 Parker Street now offering the vaccine for those groups eligible

Elder Affairs

- Continues to do wellness checks on a daily basis with people in senior housing complexes and associated with senior centers.
- Continues to deliver meals to seniors in need, including over the weekend.
- Senior Centers will currently remain closed during Phased reopening
 - Over 14,000 meals have so far been delivered to seniors in need
- 1,500 cloth face coverings were made and will be distributed to seniors in need
- 5,000 masks to be delivered to Senior Centers for seniors
- Offering Zoom classes for seniors
- Reviewing future events for seniors
- Helping seniors register for the COVID-19 vaccine

City Council

- Accepting letters of interest from residents of Ward 1 to fill the vacancy of the Ward 1 seat for City Council

DPW

- 1 out due to COVID-19
- Trash and recycling continue to be picked
- Streets and Engineering continue to provide services
- Construction projects halted for the winter season
 - Winter moratorium began December 16, 2020, with the exception for emergency repairs
 - Road work will potentially restart on March 29, 2021
- Continues to assist at Central High School Oasis Foodbank aspects on Fridays
- Responding to snow event
- Snow plowing map is public for residents to view

Eco Dev

- Continues to review and secure additional funding for restaurant and small business assistance grants.
 - \$1.5 million in Prime the Pump grant program
 - \$225,000 in First Round for restaurants
 - 58% of the first round of ‘Prime the Pump’ grants for restaurants were awarded and contracted to minority and women owned businesses
 - 21% minority owned
 - 8% women owned
 - 29% minority-women owned
 - \$500,000 in Second Round for Small Businesses
 - 45% of grants from the first two rounds of Prime the Pump were to minority businesses
 - \$500,000 in Third Round for Small Businesses
 - 84 grants awarded
 - \$250,000 in Fourth Round for Non-Profits
 - 14 grants awarded
- \$2 million allocated for mortgage, rent and utility assistance and relief through Way Finders
 - Over \$900,000 has already been utilized for relief for Springfield residents
 - Over 300 families assisted
- \$3.5 million announced for homeless services as part of the CARES Act
- \$900,000 for Common Capital Loan Program for Businesses
- Mayor Sarno and CDO Tim Sheehan sent letter to local small businesses informing them that the Commonwealth has released a program of over \$50 million in grants for small businesses that have been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic
- RFP for direct technical assistance for businesses and workforce training – tech jobs
- Continues to review and identify Federal stimulus funding to focus on local efforts for relief and recovery for our residents and small businesses
- Continues to work with HUD for spending of CDBG funds through the C.A.R.E. Act
- Continues to review costs associated with COVID-19 response for relief and recovery reimbursements.
- Tracking local, state and national unemployment trends and numbers

- City of Springfield unemployment rate (2020)
 - 4.4% - March
 - 20.8% - April
 - 22.5% - May
 - 25.9% - June
 - 25.5% - July
 - 18.8% - August
 - 16.4% - September
 - 11.8% - October
 - 10.6% - November
 - 12.2% - December
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts unemployment rate (2020)
 - 2.8% - March
 - 16.2% - April
 - 16.6% - May
 - 17.7% - June
 - 16.2% - July
 - 11.4% - August
 - 9.8% - September
 - 7.4% - October
 - 6.7% - November
 - 7.1% - December
- National unemployment rate (2020)
 - 4.4% - March
 - 14.7% - April
 - 13.3% - May
 - 11.1% - June
 - 10.2% - July
 - 8.4% - August
 - 7.9% - September
 - 6.9% - October
 - 6.7% - November
 - 6.7% - December
- Continues to review and work on economic development projects across the city.
- Continuing to review funding program for workforce training development
- Reports that revenue from small businesses is down 47%
- Continues to monitor federal relief and stimulus funding measures
- Small Business Administration opens second draw for Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) for qualifying small businesses
- Wells Fargo selects Common Capital to help provide much needed relief for small business
 - \$500,000 to help Western Massachusetts Small Businesses impacted by COVID-19

Finance

- Provided an update to Mayor and cabinet heads on the projected revenue shortfalls on the federal, state and municipal levels. Reviewed the expected budgetary constraints for the city's FY 20, FY21 and FY22 budgets
- Continues to explore all public and private means in which to secure additional PPE's for our Police and Fire Departments and our first responders and frontline personnel

- Continues to monitor all federal and state relief and recovery funding and reimbursement mechanisms
- Continues to review costs associated with COVID-19 response for relief and recovery reimbursements.
- Implementing strategic spending measures to identify areas of need, relief and recovery while also trying to maintain city services for residents and business community.
- Continuing to review and monitor with the Assessor's Department how the COVID-19 pandemic will affect local real estate sales as recorded with the Hampden County Registry of Deeds and the city's own local assessments of real estate.
 - Real estate sales for residential and commercial properties could potentially be affected due to the coronavirus outbreak, which would in turn, could have potentially negative results for the city's local assessment of property values potentially as soon as the FY21 budget
- Continues to monitor lost revenue and deficit spending – city
 - Over \$7.8 million in lost revenue due to COVID-19
 - \$2.9 million in lost revenue FY21
 - \$31.3 million in total deficit spending related to COVID-19 response
 - \$23.5 million of deficit spending has been eligible for COVID-19 related grants and reimbursement aspects
 - \$7.8 million of deficit spending still being reviewed for relief and reimbursement aspects from state and federal funding sources
- Continues proactive meetings with Josh Norman of GP Strategies to track, identify, and implement relief and recovery reimbursement aspects.
- Continuing to review and monitor all city capital projects to keep them on track to the best of our ability and to extend deadlines if needed
 - 31 Elm St / Court Square Project
 - Civic Center Parking Garage
 - Police HQ
 - Pynchon Plaza
 - Watershops Dam/Pond
 - Ruth Elizabeth Park
- Mayor Sarno and Board of Assessors Chairman Richie Allen remind residents that the deadline for property tax relief for qualifying persons is April 1, 2021 and the deadline for the Massachusetts Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit is April 15, 2021
- Working on FY22 City Budget

Libraries

- Open for curbside pickup only and by appointment
- Printing PPE masks on 3D printers
- Continuing to answer reference questions by phone and email
- Continuing to offer story times on social media sites
- Continuing to help residents access e-books and streaming movies and music on their devices
- Continuing to help residents learn, research, and explore, using our digital subscriptions and apps (language learning, grant searches, business research, children's homework help, etc.)
- Helping seniors register for the COVID-19 vaccine

Parks and Facilities

- Consulting with Bob Kirchherr, CSP, Principal and Indoor Air Quality and Industrial Hygienist for O'Reilly, Talbot & Okun Engineering Associate to review the city's air systems at all municipal buildings – police and fire HQ, City Hall, Schools, etc.
- Continuing the deep cleaning of all city buildings and facilities
- Continuing to monitor city parks on social distancing aspects
- Installing signs at city parks and facilities reminding residents to wear face coverings when social distancing is not possible
- Reviewing and implementing plans and procedures for cleaning measures and maintenance of city parks and facilities during the reopening phases
- Continuing to review potential alternate site locations for homeless triage tenting facility and population surge facility for short-term and long-term aspects pending the duration of pandemic, if needed
 - Homeless triage tenting facility was taken down July 30, 2020
- Continuing to review the city's phased reopening plan based on the Governors guidance and recommendations
 - Reviewing all protocols and procedures for short and long term reopening aspects
 - Phase I
 - Parks continue to be open for passive recreation
 - Golf courses are open with restrictions
 - Tennis courts open with restrictions
 - Park toll booths will reopen
 - Farmers markets with restrictions
 - Forest Park Zoo
 - Park picnics will be allowed with restrictions
 - Riverfront boating and kayak rents with restrictions
 - Phase II
 - No summer camps
 - Pools and beaches to remain closed
 - Playgrounds to reopen
 - Splash pads to reopen
 - Phase III
 - Outdoor performance venues – with restrictions;
 - Museums, cultural and historical sites;
 - Certain indoor recreational activities with low potential for contact – with restrictions;
 - Certain sports may hold games and practices – with restrictions
 - King Philip's Stockade, Carriage House and Emma's Place are open for renting for private functions, with restrictions
 - Tag sale permits may be issued by the City Clerk's Office, with restrictions
 - Cyr Arena reopened, with restrictions
- Continues to review the health measures and facility needs for municipal buildings during city's phased reopening - will adhere to state guidance and recommendations
 - Utilizing thermal infrared thermometers to proactively protect and preserve our workforce
 - Temperature check for employees and visitors before entering municipal buildings

- Hand sanitizer at each entrance and exit
- Limiting entrances and exits to a minimum within building and fire code
- Install protective health and safety measures at locations where the public gathers and interacts with city staff
- Reviewing air flow and ventilation systems in public buildings
- Installing pedestrian traffic flow signs and 6 feet distancing floor decals in municipal buildings
- Providing city employees with proper PPE's to preserve workforce
- Coordinating with each city department to identify the needs for Phased reopening
- Reviewing winter protocol plans for all buildings
- School improvement and repairs continue
 - \$4 million in school repairs
 - \$1.5 million in lighting improvements and upgrades with Eversource
- iWave ventilation upgrades being installed in city schools and municipal buildings

Public Safety

Fire

- 3 out due to COVID-19
- Smoke detector inspections began Monday, June 15, 2020 for homes and daycares
- Announced Food Drive to help residents in need. Non-perishable food items can be donated and dropped off at city fire stations. Residents are encouraged to call ahead or ring the doorbell and to leave items at the door for social distancing aspects.
- Continues with proactive sanitizing and disinfecting measures
- Utilizing thermal infrared thermometers to proactively protect and preserve our workforce
- Continues to respond to fires and calls for service
 - SFD reminds residents to be mindful and careful with smoking materials and other flammable items and with kitchen fires
 - SFD reminds residents to be mindful and stay off bodies of water that are frozen

Police

- Personnel Status
 - 4 out due to COVID-19
 - Focusing on department's mental health and stress relief aspects for officers
 - Academy class switched to virtual training due to COVID-19 pandemic
 - 34 cadets – Springfield
 - 4 cadets – West Springfield
 - 2 cadets – Springfield College
- Continues to provide anti-crime activity
 - Commissioner Clapprod has established a special fireworks detail to respond to the increase in calls of fireworks throughout the city
 - Numerous fireworks have been seized and citations have been issued
 - Heightened patrols with Sheriff's Department in city parks
 - Increase traffic enforcement – including special details with State Police to deter dirt bikes and drag racing activities
 - Numerous vehicles seized and citations issued
 - Increase enforcement on excessive noise from aftermarket/modified exhaust systems
 - Numerous citations and complaints issued

- Increase attention on breaking and entering crimes – residential and commercial properties
- Increase in domestic calls and restraining orders
- Increase in mental health related calls for service – more Behavioral Health Network (BHN) staff added
- Continues with positive community outreach activities where possible
- Narcotics Unit continues to take drugs and guns off the streets
 - Over 200 illegally possessed firearms have been seized
- Working with the Health Department on local enforcement aspects of Governor’s face covering order which took effect on Wednesday, May 6, 2020
- Continues to review and implement the city’s phased reopening plans for the Police Department facilities for access for the public for LTC applications and renewals, traffic accident reports and other license/permit needs by appointment
- SPD utilizing body-worn cameras. Training for the body-worn cameras had begun for officers on May 20, 2020 and the first phase of cameras were active, tested and in use on May 26, 2020
- The National Guard and State Police continue to work alongside SPD when needed and where appropriate
- Continues with proactive sanitizing and disinfecting measures
- Utilizing thermal infrared thermometers to proactively protect and preserve our workforce
- Continues to assist at Central High School Oasis Foodbank aspects on Fridays
- FBI annual Uniform Crime Report (UCR) lists that overall and violent crimes continue to decrease in Springfield
 - 44% decrease in overall crime in the past 10 years
 - 27% decrease in violent crime in the past 10 years
 - 4% decrease in overall crime from 2018-2019
 - 9% decrease in violent crime from 2018-2019
- Officers volunteered at the Oasis Food Pantry to help distribute food for those in need

Schools

- To date, Sodexo has served 6,154,308 meals to Springfield Public Schools students since the program began on March 12th (meals included breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks)
 - 17 school sites
 - Additional site at Smead Arena / Central High School added to complement the Oasis Food Bank on Fridays
- Over 20,000 laptops have been distributed to students for remote learning
 - 10,000 laptops were given out over the summer, including to our homeless students
 - 7,000 laptops were already distributed to our students before the pandemic
- iPads being distributed to Pre-K students
- Following new Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) guidelines for remote learning and enrichment
- Continuing to review, along with state officials and other School Superintendents, a phased reopening plan for the academic year
- Springfield School Committee voted on Thursday, August 6, 2020 to open fully remote for the first marking period, with a plan to reassess the school model at that time.
 - School Committee had previously voted to push the start date for the 2020-2021 school year back two weeks

- Springfield School Committee voted to stay with remote learning until all schools and facilities are safe for students and staff
- Industrial Hygienist presented report to School Committee on all school buildings for air quality, air flow, protection, and appropriate measures to help mitigate any potential spread of the virus for the safety of employees and students
- DESE announced major changes for the 2020-2021 school year
 - School year will start two weeks later and no later than Sept. 16, 2020
 - School busing will be changed by reducing the capacity of riders to accommodate social distancing protocols
 - Protocols in place for addressing any potential coronavirus-like symptoms in school for staff and students
- DESE issued “expected recommendation guidelines” for teachers who begin the school year remotely, to do so in their classrooms
 - The SPS, the Springfield School Committee and Springfield Teachers Union have agreed to begin the school year remotely for the first marking period. Springfield teachers will begin the school year teaching remotely and not in their classrooms.
- MDPH is no longer mandating new immunization requirements for influenza vaccine for attending childcare/preschool, grades kindergarten – 12 and postsecondary institutions (with certain exceptions)
 - Flu vaccine is strongly encouraged but no longer mandated
- No snow days – this school year only
- Student attendance
 - 91.7% student attendance for remote learning in first week
 - 92% student attendance for September
 - 92% student attendance for October
 - 91.5% student attendance for November
 - 92.1% student attendance for December
 - 91.2% student attendance for January
- Student athletes and coaches are being tested so sports can begin
 - 221 tested with 0 positives
- Springfield School Committee voted on Thursday, January 14, 2021 to reopen potentially on April 12, 2021
 - Reviewed the draft reopening plan for all schools
 - Certain groups of students could begin a phased-in return before that date if feasible
- DESE announced updates to the schedules and expectations for MCAS high school testing and ACCESS testing. Click [here](#) for more information.
- SPS has exceeded DESE remote learning time expectations

Law/HR/Labor

- 1 out due to COVID-19
- Continues to assist and advise all departments on pertinent city business
- Continues to review and monitor all federal and state legislation pertaining to COVID-19
- Reviewing potential guidelines, protocols and procedures for city employees to return to work in phases as the city begins to reopen under controlled safety and health measures
 - To protect and preserve our workforce – health and safety measures and protocols, and work place safety standards have been drafted for reopening phase for city employees and the public at all municipal facilities
- Continue to review Governor Baker’s Four-Phased reopening plan
- Reviewing with cabinet and department heads for reopening aspects

- Provided training material for city employees to adjust to modified workplace standards as part of the city's phased reopening plan based on CDC and health guidelines
- Utilizing thermal infrared thermometers to proactively protect and preserve our workforce
- Licensing Department accepting applications from establishments to offer outside table service for food and alcohol as part of the Governor's Phase II reopening plans
- Issued updated temporary vacation policy to city employees regarding out of state and out of country travel to protect and preserve our workforce
- Continues to advise city employees of Governor Baker's Travel Order which took effect August 1, 2020 and any changes made to the order
- Mayor Sarno offers support and relief to city restaurants and pouring establishments by asking the city's License Commission to waive the liquor license renewal fees for 2021

Misc.

Food Bank

- Continue Oasis Food Pantry operations on Friday's 10-2pm through John Foley, Sodexo, School Department, Mayor's Office, DPW, SPD and Food Bank of Western Mass – serving families in need with food and milk distribution at Central High School and Smead Arena parking lot