

March 3, 2020

Dear Residents and Members of the Hamilton-Wenham Community,

We recognize that with the abundance of news regarding Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), members of our community may have questions and concerns about how this infection may impact our community. We would like to assure you that we have been receiving and staying current with guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Today, the Town Administration of Hamilton and Wenham, Public Safety Officials, Public Health Officials, and members of the School District Leadership met together to coordinate response plans, resources, and communication so that we are prepared to collaboratively support our entire community through this time of uncertainty.

Currently, we are working to deeply understand the COVID-19 facts in order to be prepared to make evidence-based decisions as new information arises. As a community, we believe it is imperative to understand the facts and avoid social stigma. On occasions like this, it is possible for fear to get the better of any of us. It is important to remember that viruses are no one's fault and anyone can fall ill. Getting the facts from reliable sources can help avoid rumors. To this end, the DPH has created a [Public Health Fact Sheet](#). Additionally, the [CDC has created a high-level overview](#) outlining 5 basic facts along with some embedded links to additional resources. We have also included some facts below for your information;

COVID-19 Facts

COVID-19 was first identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019. At present, there has been one confirmed case in Massachusetts.

Symptoms of infection include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. The virus is believed to spread mainly through person-to-person contact via respiratory droplets when an individual is symptomatic.

COVID-19 has spread from Wuhan to other countries. Current CDC health travel alerts for the novel coronavirus include China, South Korea, Iran, Italy, Japan, and Hong Kong. Please refer to the CDC link below for [travel information and updates](#).

The incubation period for the virus is believed to be 2-14 days. Individuals who have traveled to the above-affected areas and are experiencing symptoms, or who believe they have come in contact with an infected person should contact their primary care physician. Community members who traveled to an affected area more than two weeks ago and are not experiencing symptoms of illness are not considered to be at an increased risk.

According to the [DPH](#) "There has been one confirmed case of COVID-19 in Massachusetts. On March 2, DPH [announced](#) the first presumptive positive case of COVID-19 identified by the Massachusetts State Public Health Laboratory. CDC will conduct additional testing to confirm this possible second case. **The risk to residents in Massachusetts remains low.**" (March 2, 2020)

Prevention Practices

We encourage all members of our community to continue daily practices that can help prevent the spread of viral illnesses including:

- **Washing hands with soap and water**, scrubbing hands for at least 20 seconds before rinsing or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60%-95% alcohol - [click here to view a brief handwashing video](#)
- Frequently **clean commonly touched surfaces**, including phones, tablets, keyboards, doorknobs, light switches, faucet handles, toilet flushes, countertops,
- **Avoid sharing personal items** such as ChapStick, water bottles, eating utensils, etc.
- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue or your sleeve when coughing or sneezing and then wash hands
- Community members should **stay home** and avoid contact with others when experiencing flu-like symptoms including a fever of 100.4 and should **remain home until symptom-free** and/or **fever-free for 24 hours** without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- [CDC Prevention and Treatment](#)

Following these recommendations will also help prevent the spread of influenza and gastrointestinal illnesses (norovirus) which are currently impacting our community. Remember, it is not too late to receive your flu shot if you have not already received it. Contact your town's Board of Health for more information. Hamilton BOH: 978-468- 5579 and Wenham 978-468-5520 ext. 4

- For up-to-date information, visit CDC's coronavirus disease 2019 [situation summary page](#).
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health: [Information on the Outbreak of 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

In closing, please know that we are deeply committed to the wellness of all members of our community and will continue to share new information with you, as necessary, about this evolving situation.

Kind regards,

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Chair, Wenham Board of Health

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