

## COVID-19 TASKFORCE UPDATE – May 25, 2020

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*The following was prepared by Selectman Schwall and read at the beginning of the Board of Selectmen Meeting on May 26, 2020.*

Today's statement will provide updated COVID-19 case information, what we can expect to see in week two of the Governor's Reopening Massachusetts plan, a couple of updates and reminders related to town services and the annual town election.

As of 4:00 PM today there are 93,693 confirmed COVID-19 cases in the Commonwealth compared to 87,052 last Monday; 6,733 confirmed cases in Bristol County compared to 5,996 last week, and 51 confirmed cases in Rehoboth up from 48 cases reported last Monday. This past week we also cleared a new fatality hurdle with the Commonwealth reporting 6,473 deaths directly related to the virus compared to 5,862 since last week. The rate of infection in Rehoboth as reported by the Commonwealth on May 20 was 388 cases per 100,000 in population. The behaviors exhibited by our residents keep Rehoboth the safest community in Bristol County.

Yesterday marked the second week of Phase One of the Commonwealth's Reopening Plan. Starting yesterday retailers can offer deliveries and curbside pickup. Hair salons and barbershops can operate by appointment only, as can pet groomers. Beaches also opened with social distancing restrictions, as did parks, drive-in theaters, outdoor gardens and zoos. Most fishing, hunting and boating was also allowed to resume. Each business sector included in the reopening plan must adhere to enhanced general safety requirements as well as sector specific requirements. For a complete listing the reopening phases, which businesses and activities fall into which phase, and for the general and sector specific guidelines I recommend you visit [mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov) and select 'reopening four phase approach' from the list of options.

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Memorial Day events were also allowed so long as organizers were able to keep people six feet apart and ensure everyone wore masks. Yesterday, Rehoboth Veteran's Officer, Jake Kramer, organized such an event. I will not steal Selectman Perry's thunder, but I want share it was an honor for me to be present, along with my fellow Board members, as tribute was paid to all those who selflessly paid for our freedom and liberties with their lives. I will have a little more to say on this in this statement.

### A COUPLE OF REMINDERS

The Rehoboth Rabies Clinic scheduled for June 6, 2020 has been postponed. Phase One of the Massachusetts Reopening Plan allows only for gatherings of under 10-people which makes it impractical to conduct the rabies clinic safely and remain in compliance with the guidance. We will consider rescheduling the rabies clinic as further guidance becomes available.

I also want to remind those who took advantage of the extension to the quarterly real estate tax deadline that all payments are due on or before June 1<sup>st</sup>.

### WALKING TRAILS

The weather is turning nicer and we are all looking for ways to spend more time outdoors and do it safely. We are fortunate to live in a town that offers hundreds of acres and miles of trails to explore. We have posted on the Coronavirus page of the town website a list and a brief description of the recreation properties owned by the Town and have provided a link to the Rehoboth Land Trust website which owns and maintains properties and trails throughout the town.

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Well-behaved dogs, which are under the control of their owner, are welcome to join you on your walk. Please keep in mind that now through the end of June ground nesting birds such as waterfowl, woodcock, turkey, and grouse are incubating eggs so please keep your pet on the trails; and remember to pick up your dog's waste.

Some of these trails are popular and there is a chance there will be occasions when you will need to put on your face covering when maintaining social distancing is not possible.

We also posted to the Coronavirus page a link for an advisory issued by the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles. The RMV has implemented further extensions to the renewal timelines for expiring motor vehicle inspection stickers, passenger plate registrations, professional credentials, and driver's licenses and learner's permits, including Commercial Driver's Licenses and Commercial Permits.

### TOWN ELECTION

As a reminder, the Town Election will be held on Tuesday, June 30, 2020. For a few weeks now I have been letting you know to expect changes to 'in-person' voting for the June 30<sup>th</sup> election, and encouraging everyone to request an Early Voting by Mail or Absentee ballot from the Town Clerk.

In a few minutes the Board will be discussing a request to consolidate polling into a single location and to limit the hours of in-person voting. The recommendation is driven by a need to protect our election workers, many of which who are considered part of a vulnerable population and many of which who have underlying conditions. In fact, a recent survey of appointed election workers indicates over 62% are

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unwilling to work the June 30<sup>th</sup> election; citing concerns related to the Coronavirus. This point alone requires the number of polling places and hours to be reduced since there simply will not be enough qualified workers to staff the polls. The Town Clerk has collaborated with Town Council and other Clerks across the Commonwealth to ensure the recommendation is in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 54, Section 64.

In addition to the single polling location and reduced hours, there will be other requirements regarding safety protocols, the use of PPE, and social distancing for both election workers and voters.

Once again, I will remind residents that voting by mail is the safest and most convenient way to exercise the democratic process in these uncertain times. It is also a great way to avoid the inconvenience and potential aggravation caused by the necessary changes to the in-person voting process.

As a reminder, any person may obtain an early voting or absentee ballot by sending a signed request to the Town Clerk's office or by filling out and returning the application available on the front page of the town website. All ballots will be secured in the town vault and processed on Election Day.

We appreciate those who have taken the initiative to request an Early Voting by Mail or Absentee Ballot. If you still have not requested a ballot we strongly suggest you do so and ask you not wait until the last minute to ensure there is sufficient time to process the request.

We also need to appoint and train additional election workers to ensure we have a sufficient number of qualified workers to handle the September Primary and the November General Election. I encourage

anyone who has an interest in becoming an election worker to complete a Talent Bank Form (available on the town website) or if you would like to learn more about the role of the election worker to reach out to the Town Clerk. Please consider submitting a talent bank form for this very critical role. Elections do not occur without election workers and we need help to staff these vital positions.

### PERSONAL THOUGHTS

Before closing I would like to share some personal thoughts related to Memorial Day.

The history of Memorial Day finds its roots in the 19th century. People who lost friends and relatives in the Civil War started to decorate the graves of those who had died with flowers, wreaths, and flags. That is why the original name of the holiday was *Decoration Day*. The first official observance of *Memorial Day* was in 1868 at Arlington National Cemetery where people decorated the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers with flowers. After World War I, all Americans adopted this remembrance tradition and dedicated the day to remembering those who made the supreme sacrifice in any military action.

Memorial Day is a day when we must take time to praise and honor all the men and women who gave their lives to protect our freedom and liberties. Their selfless devotion, outstanding courage and honor should inspire us to make their sacrifice meaningful by being better and caring more about our neighbors.

This concludes the update for May 26, 2020