

MAYOR WALSH ANNOUNCES SUSPENSION OF REGULAR CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY, UPCOMING CLOSURES OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND COMMUNITY CENTERS

BOSTON - Monday, March 16, 2020 - Mayor Martin J. Walsh today announced a series of updates relating to construction activity, the Boston Public Library system, and the Boston Centers for Youth & Families (BCYF). As a reminder, all Boston Public Schools will be closed starting tomorrow, Tuesday, March 17 until Monday, April 27, 2020. Should the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency improve on a faster timeline than expected, Mayor Walsh and BPS Superintendent Brenda Cassellius will look into reopening schools before April 27 if that is what is best for Boston's school communities.

"COVID-19 is one of the greatest public health challenges our city has ever faced, and the steps that we take now to mitigate its spread are critical for the wellbeing of our residents," said Mayor Walsh. "We understand these steps are disruptive for our daily lives, and I want to remind everyone that this is a citywide effort that requires everyone to do their part to help us keep our city strong and resilient. I thank all of our residents, especially our first responders and medical staff, our educators, and everyone who is making a difference."

CONSTRUCTION SITES

Effective tomorrow, Tuesday, March 17, 2020 the City is suspending all regular activity at construction sites in Boston. Employers should maintain the necessary crews to keep their sites safe and secure, keep any materials from blowing away, and prevent trespassing. This work needs to be completed in the next week, by Monday, March 23, 2020. After sites have been secured, skeleton crews will be permitted for the remainder of this suspension to ensure safety. The only work that will be permitted moving forward will be emergency work, which will need to be approved by the City of Boston's Inspectional Services Department.

That essential work includes:

- Emergency utility, road or building work, such as gas leaks, water leaks and sinkholes;
- New utility connections to occupied buildings;
- Mandated building or utility work;
- Work at public health facilities, healthcare facilities, shelters, including temporary shelters and other facilities that support vulnerable populations;
- Work which ensures the reliability of the transportation network;
- Other work necessary to render occupied residential buildings fully habitable.

In addition to the list of essential construction projects, the City will, on a case-by-case basis, review requests for exceptions to the temporary construction moratorium. These may be granted by the Commissioner of Inspectional Services for building-related work or the Commissioner of Public Works for street-related work. These will be granted if they support increased public health and safety.

This policy is effective as of March 17 and will be reviewed at regular intervals. New projects cannot be started at this time, unless they meet the criteria above. Any currently permitted and active construction project must be in a secure situation by Monday, March 23. This policy only applies to projects permitted by the City of Boston.

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

As of 6:00 p.m. today, all branches of the Boston Public Library (BPL) system are closed until further notice including the central library in Copley Square. During this time, BPL will expand automatic renewals, and allow people to keep their books and other materials for an additional 15 weeks, instead of the standard three weeks.

All late fines will be waived until May 1, 2020 and library patrons will have until October to renew their library card if it is set to expire. In the coming days and weeks, BPL will increase online services, including ebooks, downloadable movies, audio books, and other information resources.

As a part of the City's school closure plan, Chromebooks are being distributed to every student who needs them. Students will be encouraged to make use of the BPL's vast collection of resources during this time.

BOSTON CENTERS FOR YOUTH & FAMILIES

All BCYF pools, gyms and fitness centers are closed. By this Wednesday, March 18, 2020, all BCYF programming will be suspended. Only select BCYF centers will be open for youth meal distribution during school closures. For a list of meal distribution locations, go to boston.gov/coronavirus.

To protect Bostonians and their families from the spread of the virus, residents are reminded to practice caution: wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol; avoid shaking hands; cover your coughs and sneezes; clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces; and avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you think you might be sick, please call your doctor or 311 to be connected to the Mayor's Health Line. Residents are also reminded to practice social distancing: keep your distance from others (6 feet apart); avoid crowded places.

Residents are asked to not call 9-1-1 unless you are experiencing a medical emergency. The City and BPHC will continue to provide updated information on bphc.org and boston.gov/coronavirus.