

Acushnet Fire Chief: “We are dismayed by the state’s lack of interest in bringing COVID testing to Acushnet

A MESSAGE FROM FIRE CHIEF KEVIN GALLAGHER:

“Earlier this week, the Acushnet Board of Selectmen endorsed a proposal to have the Fire & EMS Department conduct community-based testing for Covid-19. EMTs will be trained in test administration and the services of a certified lab will be secured. The goal is test results in 24–36 hours.

Because private insurance does not typically cover testing for people not experiencing COVID symptoms, those who are asymptomatic, the Selectmen have authorized the use of CARES ACT funds received from the state for this important project. All tests will be offered free of charge.

While the details of the plan are still being formalized (a formal document will be submitted to the Selectmen for their review at their September 8th meeting) we are creating our plan based on the following “Phases.” Each phase builds off each other:

PHASE ONE: At the request of any town department, trained EMTs will respond and conduct tests based on the situation presented. This is designed to assist the schools in their reopening plans as well as the plans to open town buildings to the public. An example of Phase One; following the guidance offered by the state, the schools have reason to send a cohort home and recommend testing. Instead of multiple families making numerous calls to physicians and testing locations, our team would coordinate testing at an Acushnet site for the staff, students, and their immediate families. All testing

results would be returned at the same time benefiting next step decisions.

PHASE TWO: Testing of high-risk populations.

PHASE THREE: Scheduled in advance testing open to all town residents.

We have been dismayed by the state's lack of interest in bringing free COVID testing to Acushnet as part of their "Stop the Spread" initiative. It was decided that we would take action on our own. The local benefits are real. For example, our Health Department would receive a head start initiating contact tracing as the results will come to us directly via a secured portal a period of time prior to formal notification from the state. This will help Acushnet stop the spread!

This is a big task and one we did not envision carrying out back in January, however, these are not common times. The goal is a community-level testing plan that addresses immediate needs, high-risk groups and the public at large. The cooperation of town departments has been strong as has the leadership of the Boards of Selectmen and Health. We look forward to getting to work."

#TestingWeGotThis