

Acushnet Fire Chief Gallagher issues statement on positive COVID-19 tests results in town

“At the close of this week, 78 Acushnet residents have tested positive for Covid-19.

“This number comes as a result of a person being tested, the test coming back positive, the state being notified by the testing facility then calling the Acushnet Health Agent who passes the addresses (not the names) to public safety officials so our 9-1-1- database can be updated for the protection of our first responders. That is an awful lot of steps over an awful lot of time.

“As a town, we agreed that providing these numbers is important to keep the community updated as we are updated. In the mid-afternoon of each day, seven days per week, I send an email to the Standard-Times so they can update their running tally which is then shared in both their print and online editions. The goal is to be transparent in order for the public to stay informed.

“We have been reporting no deaths in the town of Acushnet because the state has not told us of any. However, when asked by a reporter to update our earlier response we learned of a glitch that deserves to be explained. When a person dies, the “place of occurrence” is formally notified. So, if a person living in New Bedford but walking in Acushnet suddenly dies, Acushnet officials are informed of the death, not officials from the person’s hometown.

“What we discovered is that, since the pandemic started, four residents of Acushnet have died of Covid-19 while in New

Bedford, two at a nursing home and two at the hospital. These deaths were reported, per the procedure, to New Bedford officials. The death certificates slowly make their way to the Town Clerk in Acushnet for appropriate record keeping. New Bedford, in turn, would add these deaths to the number they share to the local newspaper. Based on this process, a death is not double reported (by New Bedford and by Acushnet) which would be misleading to all involved.

"The point of all of this, four Acushnet residents have died as a result of a virus that traveled from China with breakneck speed and took root in our area with devastating results. We did not fail to report these deaths, we were simply not connecting all the dots and for that I apologize. I'm sorry if previous numbers shared now seem misleading. Residents have a right to know everything that is going on so you can decide for yourself how to respond in real time to the events swirling around you.

"I am also sorry to the families, loved ones and friends of the four members of this community who have suffered a Covid-19 related death. While we do not know their names, chances are we crossed their path in this small little town. They were part of the fabric of this community and we mourn their loss.

"Seventy-eight cases and four deaths, as of today Acushnet! It doesn't take a genius to know that number can't go down. It only takes common sense to know it will only go up."

Kevin A. Gallagher
Fire Chief."

Baker provides guidance for re-opening restaurants and lodging in Massachusetts

Today, the Baker-Polito Administration provided an update on the Reopening Massachusetts plan and preparations for Phase II. The Administration will determine the start of Phase II on June 6th.

On Monday, Governor Charlie Baker will issue an executive order with a detailed list of sectors that fall into each phase. The order will allow Phase II businesses to bring back employees in preparation for re-opening. Through this order, professional sports teams can begin practicing at their facilities in compliance with the health and safety rules that all the leagues are developing. Facilities remain closed to the public.

Restaurant and Lodging Guidance: The Administration today issued workplace safety standards for restaurants and lodging. These workplace specific safety standards are organized around four distinct categories covering Social Distancing, Hygiene Protocols, Staffing and Operations and Cleaning and Disinfecting.

Restaurants: Outdoor dining will begin at the start of Phase II. Indoor dining will begin later within Phase II, subject to public health data. Even when indoor seating is permitted, use of outdoor space will be encouraged for all restaurants.

Social distancing guidance includes spacing tables six feet apart with a maximum party size of six people. The use of bars, except for spaced table seating, will not be permitted. For hygiene protocols, utensils and menus should be kept clean through single use or with strict sanitation guidelines, reservations or call ahead seating is recommended and

contactless payment, mobile ordering or text on arrival for seating will also be encouraged.

Restaurants will be expected to follow cleaning and disinfecting guidelines, in accordance with CDC guidance. This includes closing an establishment temporarily if there is a case of COVID-19 in an establishment.

Lodging: Hotels, motels and other lodging businesses will be allowed to expand their operations in Phase II. Lodging safety standards apply to all forms of lodging including hotels, motels, inns, bed and breakfasts, short term residential rentals including Airbnb and VRBO.

Event spaces, like ballrooms and meeting rooms, will remain closed. On-site restaurants, pools, gyms, spas, golf courses and other amenities at lodging sites may operate only as these categories are authorized to operate in accordance with the phased re-opening plan. Lodging operators also must inform guests of the Commonwealth's policy urging travelers to self-quarantine for 14 days when arriving from out-of-state.

On May 18th, the Baker-Polito Administration released Reopening Massachusetts, the Reopening Advisory Board's report, which details a four-phased strategy to responsibly reopen businesses and activities while continuing to fight COVID-19.

Distribution of masks begins with North End New Bedford

residents this weekend

MaskNB, an initiative announced by Mayor Jon Mitchell in partnership with the Southeastern Massachusetts chapter of the American Red Cross and Joseph Abboud Manufacturing Corporation, will begin mask distribution this weekend, May 30 and 31 at New Bedford High School's parking lot.

The distribution of cloth masks at no cost to City residents begins with North End residents this weekend, as the distribution is organized by Ward. The distribution will be done through an organized drive-through system for cars, observing social distancing. Residents are asked to limit their mask requests to those in their household and/or any elderly or vulnerable neighbors (who have been advised against leaving their homes).

On Saturday, May 30, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., residents of Ward 1 may pick up masks at New Bedford High School's parking lot, 230 Hathaway Boulevard. Ward 1 contains most of the far North End, roughly the area of the city located north of Tarkiln Hill Road.

On Sunday, May 31, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., residents of Ward 2 may pick up masks at New Bedford High School's parking lot, 230 Hathaway Boulevard. Ward 2 contains most of the near North End, roughly the area of the city located north of Coggeshall Street and south of Tarkiln Hill Road.

Residents of Ward 3 and Ward 4 may pick up masks the weekend of June 6 and 7.

Residents of Ward 5 and Ward 6 may pick up masks the weekend of June 13 and 14.

Any resident who is unsure of the Ward in which they live may visit wheredoivotema.com and enter their address. This website provides polling location, and the first information noted is

the Ward in which the resident lives. Residents do not need to be registered voters to use this online tool.

Under the MaskNB distribution plan, interested residents in each of the City's six Wards will have an opportunity to obtain free cloth face masks at New Bedford High School, 230 Hathaway Boulevard, on the following assigned dates and times:

Ward 1 – Saturday, May 30 – 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Ward 2 – Sunday, May 31 – 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Ward 3 – Saturday, June 6 – 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Ward 4 – Sunday, June 7 – 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Ward 5 – Saturday, June 13 – 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Ward 6 – Sunday, June 14 – 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The dates are listed at www.masknb.com. Additional dates may be announced based on available supplies.

Residents should arrive at the main vehicle entrance of New Bedford High School, located at 230 Hathaway Boulevard, and remain in their vehicles as Red Cross volunteers hand out masks based on their requests. Residents are asked to limit their mask requests to those in their household and/or any elderly or vulnerable neighbors (who have been advised against leaving their homes).

Mayor Jon Mitchell announced the MaskNB initiative on May 14. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend the wearing of cloth face coverings in public where social distancing is difficult to maintain; cloth face coverings are not a substitute for medical-grade masks, but provide more protection against the spread of viruses than not covering one's face. More information about the use and effectiveness of cloth face coverings to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>.

New Bedford officials reports 13 more COVID-19 cases on Friday

Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported 13 additional confirmed COVID-19 cases in New Bedford on Friday, bringing the total positive cases in the city to 1,794, **up from 1,781 on Thursday**. COVID-19 related deaths remained at 68.

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell announced last week that the Buttonwood Park Zoo would be opening under the first phase of the plan to reopen Massachusetts. Full details **here**.

17 additional cases of COVID-19 have been identified in Fall River, according to Mayor Coogan. This brings the total in Fall River to 1,233. The death toll from the coronavirus in Fall River has increased to 35 as 2 more residents have sadly lost their life. Full details **here**.

Seven Bristol County Sheriff's Office staff members and eight county inmates have tested positive for COVID-19 since May 21. Full details **here**.

Boston Marathon canceled as Mayor Walsh prepares for

summer of distancing

Chris Lisinski

Katie Lannan contributed

State House News Service

The Boston Marathon has been run in some form every year since 1897, withstanding the 1918 influenza pandemic, two world wars and other disruptions. But with the state's path through the COVID-19 era still uncertain, the marathon will not take place in 2020.

During a wide-ranging press conference that included hints about restaurant reopenings and an announcement about expanding roadway spacing, Boston Mayor Martin Walsh announced Thursday that the marathon, previously postponed from April 20 until Sept. 14, will be outright canceled this year.

The historic first underscores how long the road to the new normal will be for Massachusetts.

"We're putting our own health and other people's health before our own celebration, our own enjoyment of these events," Walsh said. "Right now, the best celebration we can do to each other is respecting each other and supporting each other and not spreading the virus."

Officials had hoped that delaying the marathon about five months would buy enough time to conduct it safely, but Walsh said he became convinced it is "less and less plausible" because of how long the post-peak tail of infection has been and because of the lingering threat of a second surge in COVID-19 cases between August and October.

"There's no way to hold this usual race format without bringing large numbers of people into close proximity," he said. "While our goal and our hope was to make progress in containing the virus and recovering our economy, this type of

event would not be possible or realistic on Sept. 14 or any time this year.”

Restaurants and other tourism-centric businesses, many of which are already under enormous strain, will take another hit from the cancellation. Walsh estimated that marathon weekend typically draws about \$200 million into the regional economy.

Boston Athletic Association CEO Tom Grilk said the organization will issue refunds to all registered runners, and when it opens the field for the 2021 Marathon, it will consider qualifying race times as far back as September 2018.

The BAA will conduct a “virtual marathon” between Sept. 7 and 14, making available online panels and a “printable finish line.” Any runner who completes 26.2 miles within six hours during that span and can provide proof of time will earn a medal, a t-shirt and a runner’s bib.

During a separate press conference later on Thursday, Gov. Charlie Baker said the city and the BAA “made the right decision by erring on the side of caution.”

“We’ve all concluded that – and I know this is not the answer anybody would want to hear – that for the time being, we are better off being careful and cautious when it comes to really big events like that,” he said.

Baker filed a bill (H 4571) to designate Sept. 14 as a state holiday after the race was postponed on March 13, but neither the House nor Senate moved to vote on it in the ensuing months.

The marathon cancellation comes as the state continues its early steps toward reviving public activity. The resumption of full, large-scale recreational activities will not get approval to resume until the fourth phase of the Baker administration’s plan, during which officials hope to have a COVID-19 vaccine or treatment available – a milestone that may

be months or more than a year away.

"Nothing close to old normal routines will be possible until a vaccine or an effective treatment for COVID is ready," Walsh said Thursday.

State officials have indicated that restaurants could expand beyond takeout and delivery operations starting in the second phase, when lodging could also reopen with safety precautions in place.

Baker's team tapped a separate group to craft recommendations for those industries, and Walsh said Thursday that he expects those guidelines to surface as soon as Friday.

"We're working with the state right now waiting for the state to finalize the guidelines," Walsh said. "We're expecting probably within the next 24 hours, we'll know from the state, whether indoor (dining), outdoor or both."

The city has been studying how to make outdoor, socially distant dining more feasible once restaurants get the go-ahead, and Walsh said 264 establishments expressed interest in placing seating on sidewalks or parking lanes.

Asked about closing entire streets to make space for dining al fresco, Walsh said he has some concerns with shutting down major thoroughfares but wants to consider the matter on a case-by-case basis.

"Every option's on the table," he said.

Other states have opened rights-of-way they control to restaurants during the COVID era to help space out patrons during warm-weather months.

Walsh also announced a framework for employers in the city, who can begin hosting employees in physical offices on June 1, as long as they cap capacity at 25 percent.

The range of recommendations include limiting elevators to four people at a time, naming a workplace COVID-19 coordinator, placing markers of six-foot distances in all high-traffic areas, and regularly disinfecting public spaces.

Boston businesses should instruct all employees and visitors to cover their faces unless they have a medical condition or disability, and the employers should provide facial coverings to workers, Walsh said.

Over the next few months, the city also plans to implement changes on its streets aimed at ensuring residents can practice social distancing.

Boston's Transportation Department starting in June will expand bus stops at 10 locations, such as Broadway Station and the northbound Hynes Station stop. Workers will also build new bike lanes to connect the downtown area to other parts of the city.

"As we move through this next reopening phase of COVID-19, it's incumbent upon all of us to make sure we can get it right," Walsh said. "The impact of a second shutdown on our economy could be even more devastating than the first."

**New Bedford Symphony
Orchestra FREE live-stream
performance "Welcoming Summer**

with Dvořák”

LIVE STREAM on Sunday, May 31, 4pm.

Tune in on our website or on Facebook for a LIVE STREAM of Welcoming Summer with Dvořák when NBSO violinist Emmy Holmes-Hicks is joined once again by her downstairs neighbors, good friends, and wonderful musicians Adrienne Taylor (cello) and Andrei Baumann (piano).

Emmy, Adrienne, and Andrei will be back for another afternoon of chamber music for piano and strings. In these strange times, we can find hope and comfort in the natural world and the changing of the seasons. We bring you this program of Dvořák’s brooding, romantic, and folksy music to help welcome in the summer. We’re keeping Andrei busy with a program that includes the Dumky Trio, which means literally a song or lament of captive people; Silent Woods for cello and piano, which takes us on a tour of southwestern Bohemia; and Four Romantic Pieces for violin and piano, a charming collection of miniatures.

You have two options to view this live stream. The live videos will not appear until very close to 4pm, and it is possible that the performance may start a bit late.

Option 1: If you have a Facebook account, go to the NBSO Facebook Live Videos page where you will see current and past live videos. Click on Welcoming Summer with Dvořák to open the post so that you can comment and see others’ comments.

Option 2: Go to our website and look for the Events tab, then Upcoming Events, and click on Welcoming Summer with Dvořák. Simply scroll down to find the video.

All of our live stream performances can be viewed afterward in either place.

Bristol County Sheriff: 32 inmates, 34 staff members have tested COVID-19 positive

Seven Bristol County Sheriff's Office staff members and eight county inmates have tested positive for COVID-19 since May 21.

All of the seven staff members to test positive since May 21 are members of the security team; six corrections officers and one sergeant. A total of 34 staff members have tested positive since the beginning of March. Sixteen have recovered and returned to duty and two more are expected back this weekend, while the rest are expected to make full recoveries and return to duty in the coming weeks.

The total number of county inmates who have tested positive for COVID is now 32, 28 of which are still in BCSO custody. As reported last week, four county inmates who had tested positive were released as their sentences ended. Prior to their release, the BCSO provided notification of the positive test to the person picking them up and the state Department of Public Health, which in turn notifies the communities they are returning to. Of the 28 still in BCSO custody, several of them have recovered and returned to general population and the others are being kept in isolation and closely monitored by medical professionals.

Over the past few months, the Bristol County Sheriff's Office has instituted many protocols to protect inmates, detainees and staff from the Coronavirus outbreak. Some of those measures include:

- All employees were given masks that must be worn inside the

secure perimeter of our facilities. All inmates and detainees have also been given masks to wear for protection.

- All areas of the facility are being cleaned\disinfected every day on every shift.
 - All staff members are being screened before entering the buildings; new arriving inmates are being screened before being accepted into custody.
 - In-person visitation has been suspended to limit the number of people coming in and out.
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New Bedford officials reports seven COVID-19 related deaths in past two days

New Bedford officials reported four additional COVID-19 related deaths since Wednesday bringing the total to 68. This makes for seven COVID-19 related deaths in the past two days.

Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported 23 additional confirmed COVID-19 cases in New Bedford on Thursday, bringing the total positive cases in the city to 1,781, **up from 1,758 on Wednesday.**

20 additional cases of COVID-19 have been identified in Fall River, according to Mayor Coogan. This brings the total in Fall River to 1,216. The death toll from the coronavirus in Fall River has increased to 33 as 5 more residents have sadly lost their life. Full details **here.**

Gov. Charlie Baker on Tuesday evening signed into law a suite

of unemployment insurance relief measures that are aimed at helping employers and claimants during the coronavirus pandemic. Full details [here](#).

Turnover in Massachusetts jail population creates constant challenge

Colin A. Young
State House News Service

As with nearly every household and business in the state, the COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges for Massachusetts sheriffs and jails. At the Middlesex Jail & House of Correction in Billerica, Sheriff Peter Koutoujian is managing turnover among the incarcerated population and finding opportunities to do things differently.

Since the beginning of March, Koutoujian has overseen a 27 percent reduction in the jail's population – from 788 people incarcerated the week that ended March 7 to 578 the week that ended May 16 – but has also accepted more than 500 new commitments during the same time period, according to data provided by the sheriff's office. That's created two fronts in the battle against the highly-contagious virus: first, trying to prevent the virus from getting inside the jail's walls by screening everyone at intake and then working to keep the incarcerated population safe, all while maintaining the tight security of a jail.

"We've dealt with those that were inside, but we still have people that are coming from the outside that are actually

positive,” Koutoujian, who also serves as president of the Massachusetts Sheriffs Association and Major County Sheriffs of America, said. His office said that of the nine incarcerated people tested the week of May 11 to May 18, only one tested positive – a new commitment who was identified as COVID-positive at intake and was immediately placed into medical isolation.

While the state’s prisons run by the Department of Correction have seen a slowdown in intakes while jury trials are on hold and many court proceedings are put off, the state’s jails continue to accept the newly-arrested. In some cases, that’s put the facilities at risk of exposure to COVID-19.

On Tuesday, Hampden County Sheriff Nick Cocchi put his jail in Ludlow on lockdown after eight inmates tested positive for COVID-19, the first cases among the incarcerated population there. Cocchi said his staff “had reason for concern based on the volume of arrestees over the Memorial Day weekend, a majority of whom scored high on the COVID-19 screening process.”

As the COVID-19 pandemic came into view and it became obvious that social distancing would be difficult in jails, many sheriffs began evaluating inmates for release, with an emphasis on the elderly and those with chronic health conditions. Koutoujian said Middlesex County had already reduced its population by more than 100 by the time the Supreme Judicial Court ruled in April that pre-trial detainees charged with non-violent crimes could seek release during the coronavirus outbreak.

“The idea of decarceration is one that is based in social justice and jurisprudence in almost one’s feelings about government and the role of corrections and the criminal justice system. Here, this decarceration has actually brought tangible opportunities to protect our population,” Koutoujian, the former chairman of the Joint Committee on Health Care and

Joint Committee on Public Health said. "This is not a philosophical or jurisprudential exercise for me. This is something that I've been able to use and, by the way, a general reduction in incarceration is good for corrections because that means that instead of housing people we actually become houses of corrections, we actually get to do more programming and have opportunities to reduce recidivism."

As the novel coronavirus was spreading across Asia and Europe in February, Koutoujian began consulting with Dr. Alysse Wurcel, an infectious diseases specialist at Tufts Medical Center who had previously worked with Middlesex County on HIV/AIDS and hepatitis issues. She's provided substantial input as the jail braced for and then dealt with its own positive cases.

"Every move that we've made is a medically-driven decision that we then operationalize," Koutoujian said. "It's been a really good, healthy relationship because she's really understanding the security issues up here."

"The Way It Was"

The sheriff's office began its COVID-19 screening protocols for new commitments on March 4 and suspended in-person family and friend visits to the Billerica jail as of March 13. To keep inmates connected to their friends and loved ones, the sheriff began on March 17 offering each incarcerated person a weekly quota of four free phone calls of up to 20 minutes each.

Koutoujian said eliminating visitation programs "is not something you do very lightly here" because maintaining family contact is important for a successful reentry to society and keeps people grounded while incarcerated. Providing an alternative to in-person visits was important, he said, because suspending visits was not meant as a punishment.

"These are sort of small things ... sometimes they're just

gestures. We did a special meal for the population the other day. These are small gestures that make them understand we're in this together, let's make this work and to show that respect to them, so that we don't have to have any outbursts or any violence or anything like that that can foster in these difficult circumstances."

The sheriff said he expects the population of his facility will eventually go back up, but not to pre-pandemic levels, and that has him thinking about what other services his office may be freed up to provide.

"I'm not sure we'll go back to the way it was. And so what does that mean? Does that mean more programs that we can offer? More assistance to our communities? More assistance to our other state government agencies? What are the new things that we think we might be able to offer in what will be the new normal?" he said. "It's an exciting time to think of what the future will be, as we deal with a crisis now."

For example, Koutoujian said his office has facilitated 1,000 court appearances via video and phone conferences while the courts have been physically closed. Why not continue that practice for some hearings even once courts reopen?

"The idea to use more video and audio conferencing for non-substantive court hearings, it would save a lot of money but more important than saving money, it would actually reduce the the issue of contraband, both weapons and drugs," he said, adding that court lock-ups can be a source of prohibited items.

Video conferencing technology could also be used for meetings between attorneys and incarcerated clients, or as an alternative to in-person visits after the pandemic recedes, he said.

"For a family to come up to the jail and do a visit, it can be time-consuming and it can be expensive to take

transportation,” Koutoujian said. “If we can find a cost-effective way to bring video visitation as a way to supplement visitations by family, by attorneys, that’s another exciting opportunity.”

But before getting to the new normal that might await on the other side of the COVID-19 pandemic, Koutoujian and the state’s other sheriffs have to deal with many of the same pandemic-related issues that are common outside of the corrections world – including a dip in vigilance about social distancing and mask wearing – while preparing for the possibility that an uptick in cases in Massachusetts could affect jails.

“We have to remain vigilant even today. I’m getting concerned that people are starting to relax a little bit, like they are in the public,” he said. “We’re not a fortresses on the hill. It’s not like a bubble, right? What goes on in the community affects us and what goes on in our facility affects the community. So as you can worry about people getting a little bit more lax in the public, we worry about that inside and make sure that we’re remaining vigilant.”

2020 Massachusetts Teacher of Year reflects on remote education immersion

Katie Lannan
State House News Service

The abrupt shift to remote education during the COVID-19 state of emergency left teachers and students with a lot to adjust

to, according to the 2020 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year.

Takeru Nagayoshi, a New Bedford High School English teacher, briefed the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Tuesday on his experiences since schools closed in March. Nagayoshi holds hour-long live classes three times a week, with group work, office hours and check-ins the other two days, he said. The daily attendance for Nagayoshi's courses averages at about 65 percent to 85 percent, he said, with many of his students working, serving as the main child care provider for siblings, or grappling with technology and internet access issues.

"I think a lot of adults tend to make the assumption that our students are digital natives, and they're not," Nagayoshi told the board. "They're actually smartphone natives, and when it comes to using laptops, there are specific ways in which we need to explicitly teach them how to navigate, how to use all of the tools that are out there."

Some students miss the accountability and structure of the traditional classroom setting, while others can benefit from the self-guided environment and flexibility that remote learning offers, he said, encouraging education officials to think about how to retain the elements that work for some students as they plan for the uncertainty of the coming school year. For educators, Nagayoshi said, there have been "a lot of growing pains around what it means to teach in a remote setting."

"We're all out of our element and, really, teaching to a bunch of little postage stamps is not the same as having in-person connection," he said.