

COVID-19 Infection Increase sparks enforcement, gatherings crackdown in Massachusetts

Gov. Charlie Baker has had enough of people holding large private gatherings and disregarding COVID-19 mitigation strategies like social distancing. So on Friday, he indefinitely paused the state's economic reopening, lowered the outdoor gathering limit, and empowered the police to enforce coronavirus-related orders.

Amid reports of large parties and unauthorized gatherings, Baker said "some residents feel a bit too relaxed about the seriousness of this virus." He said he was putting the tighter restrictions in place in response to the uptick in COVID-19 cases that Massachusetts has seen in recent weeks.

"People need to understand that big groups – especially if people don't distance and don't wear face coverings, and don't do any of the things that have been talked about and discussed time and time again – create, in many cases, spread," Baker said during a State House press conference. "And that's a big part of why we're enhancing enforcement for local police and State Police, and why we're lowering our gathering limit for outdoor events, and why we're also, at the same time, going to engage a multidisciplinary effort around public health and public safety with the communities that have demonstrated that they are, in fact, higher-risk here in Massachusetts."

The number of active COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts rose nearly 25 percent between July 29 and Aug. 5, and has been steady or climbing for nearly a month as new COVID-19 infections are once again outpacing recoveries.

The governor said the second step of Phase 3 of the state's reopening plan will be put on hold and the gathering limit for any outdoor event will be reduced from 100 to 50 as of Tuesday. The limit for indoor gatherings will remain at 25, but Baker said the limits apply to all types of locations on public or private property. The revised order also mandates that everyone wears a mask or face covering anywhere that more than 10 people from different households could mix.

Movie theaters, gyms, casinos, museums and more were allowed to reopen in early July as part of Phase 3. The Baker administration referred to it as "Step One of Phase III" but did not fully detail what would be included in the second step of Phase 3. On the state's reopening website, it lists indoor theater or concert hall performances, and laser tag, roller skating, trampolines and obstacle courses as the activities that would be allowed to reopen in step two of Phase 3.

Baker said Friday that he was authorizing all state and local police to enforce the orders, and that people who host events – even on private property – that exceed gathering limits will be subject to fines. He also announced the creation of a COVID Enforcement and Intervention Team that will ramp up enforcement efforts and coordinate intervention efforts in yet-to-be-named high-risk communities.

"We have to work hard, always, harder in some respects than ever, to contain COVID-19 and keep our economy open for business," Baker said. "We also want to keep this virus out of our communities as we head into the fall so we can give our kids a chance to get back to school."

The governor's end-of-week announcement was met with scorn from the National Federation of Independent Business, which whacked Baker for slowing down the timeline to reopen for businesses.

"It is extremely disappointing that Governor Baker is choosing

to roll back the state's reopening, especially with Massachusetts now facing the worst unemployment rate in the nation. Many of these businesses, that were patiently waiting for Phase 3 part 2 to begin, may now never reopen their doors again," Christopher Carlozzi, state director of the local chapter of NFIB, said. "Instead of delaying the opening of certain businesses, many taking every step imaginable to keep workers and customers safe, the administration should pursue the private gatherings that are causing the problems."

Though he said there have been issues with restaurants and bars – "bars are closed in Massachusetts and bars masquerading as restaurants also need to be closed," he said – the governor on Friday suggested that the coronavirus is primarily spreading in Massachusetts at social gatherings, not mainly in the workplace or at businesses that have reopened.

"When you chase a lot of the contact tracing, the biggest issue we have is people who are familiar with people being familiar with them in big groups," he said.

He added, "If you think about a party, take a Fourth of July party or even a birthday party: 40 or 50 people in somebody's backyard, moms and dads, the kids, all the rest; nobody wearing a face mask, nobody socially distancing; one or two people there who are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic; hugs, handshakes, high fives, dancing, who knows, right? A whole bunch of people walk away from there little ticking clocks that are gonna go off at some point. And they go back home and they pass it along to a few people in their family and then we're off."

To deal with some of the problems reported at restaurants, Baker said Friday that his office had updated guidance for restaurants to make clear that they cannot act as de facto bars, which are slated to remain closed until there is a medical breakthrough to treat or cure COVID-19.

"One of the things that's come up a number of times is that pretzels and potato chips meets the food service requirement. It clearly doesn't," he said. "What we tried to do with the amendment of the order is make absolutely clear you need to be serving food that's prepared on-site and the people who are in your venue need to order and eat food if they're going to order a drink."

The administration also revealed plans Friday for a multi-agency COVID Enforcement and Intervention Team. Led by the Executive Office and Public Safety and Security and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, the team will also include officials from the state's COVID-19 Command Center, the Massachusetts State Police, Department of Labor Standards, Division of Professional Licensure, Department of Public Health, Division of Local Services, Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission and the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security.

"This team will coordinate an increased enforcement effort across the state to ensure businesses and residents are aware of and are following the COVID-19 orders. By authorizing state and local police to enforce these orders, we can not only increase the number of people who will be out there and able to enforce these measures, but also ensure that there are penalties for those who refuse to make the adjustments that so many other people in Massachusetts have made and continue to make," Baker said. "Secondly, the COVID-19 Command Center will identify higher-risk communities that we can work with collaboratively to help them deal with their outbreaks. This will be different in every town, but it will include things like helping a town access additional federal relief funds if circumstances warrant it. It will also likely include significant assistance to ramp up enforcement with respect to businesses, face coverings and gathering orders."

Baker said the higher-risk communities will be identified using public health data, but will not be named until next

week. He said he would have more to say on Tuesday.

“We still have some homework to do in terms of reaching out to and engaging the communities that, based on the public health data, are going to fall into this higher-risk category and we want to make sure we have a chance to talk to them and to start beginning the process of integrating our efforts with theirs before we name names,” he said.

Boston Police charge man who was set free by the Massachusetts Bail Fund with kidnapping, rape, and strangulation

A man who had two prior rape convictions, and had recently set free by Massachusetts Bail Fund after they posted the \$15,000 bail, is charged with a new rape.

At about 1:28 PM on Wednesday, August 5, 2020, officers assigned to District B-3 (Mattapan) responded to a radio call to assist Boston EMS with an assault victim in the area of Blue Hill Ave and Wales Street in Dorchester.

On arrival, officers spoke to the adult female victim who was transported to a local hospital for treatment.

Following an extensive investigation by the Boston Police Department Sexual Assault Unit, a suspect was identified and taken into custody.

Officers arrested Shawn McClinton, 39-years-old, of Dorchester. McClinton is expected to be arraigned in Dorchester District Court on charges of Aggravated Rape, Armed Kidnapping with Sexual Assault, Strangulation, and Assault by means of a Dangerous Weapon.

The Massachusetts Bail Fund whose slogan is “Free Them All” opposes the bail system because they believe it is unfair to those with a lower income and because it doesn’t work in preventing crime.

City Councilors Dunn and Coelho absent from first four New Bedford 2021 budget meetings

The New Bedford City Council has held four formal meetings to finalize the City of New Bedford budget for 2021 – two councilors have been completely absent from all four meetings with another attending only half of them.

New Bedford Guide requested the budget attendance logs with Assistant City Council Clerk Susan Henriques. The attendance records revealed that At-large City Councilor Debora Coelho and Ward 3 City Councilor Hugh Dunn have not attended any of the four meetings and At-large City Councilor Brian Gomes has attended two of them. In Feb of 2020, **Councilor Debora Coelho announced that after 14-years on the city council she would retire at the end of this current term** that started in January and lasts two years.

Seven of the eleven city councilors have attended all four budget meetings; Ian Abreu, Naomi Carney, Linda Morad, William Markey, Derek Baptiste, Scott Lima, and Joe Lopes. Councilor Giesta missed one meeting due to a family emergency.

Councilor Dunn explained his absence: "I have reviewed the budget book extensively and prefer to go directly to department heads when there are questions. I feel it is important to clarify that these are discretionary briefings, no votes take place at the meetings, and they are recorded and available to be viewed after the fact if necessary. My absence has no impact on my ability to effectively represent my constituents as we navigate the budget process."

Councilors Coelho and Gomes were emailed and given a full day to provide a comment but didn't respond at the time of this article being published.

Finalizing the City budget is one of the critical roles of the City Council. **Mayor Mitchell presented his 2021 City Budget before the New Bedford City Council on Wednesday, July 15**, via virtual meeting due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The budget total is \$365 million, but the City Council can make cuts to it or leave it alone. Councilors meet with department heads to discuss their portion of the budgets and then make cuts based on these discussions. The size of the budget will also play a major role in property tax increases or fee hikes. Additionally, **Mayor Mitchell has proposed closing the downtown police station and decommissioning Engine 8** – decisions the City Council will have to approve.

There are six total budget meetings this year with the final two meetings among department heads scheduled for 10 and 12 August. The final budget meeting and vote is on Aug 24.

Here are the attendance logs for the first four New Bedford City Council budget meetings:

Monday, July 27, 2020

PRESENT:

- ABREU
- BAPTISTE
- CARNEY
- GIESTA
- LIMA
- LOPES
- MARKEY
- MORAD

Wednesday, July 29, 2020

PRESENT:

- ABREU
- BAPTISTE
- CARNEY
- GOMES
- LIMA
- LOPES
- MARKEY
- MORAD

Tuesday, August 4, 2020

PRESENT:

- ABREU
- BAPTISTE
- CARNEY
- GIESTA
- GOMES
- LIMA
- LOPES
- MARKEY
- MORAD

Thursday, August 6, 2020

PRESENT:

- ABREU
 - BAPTISTE
 - CARNEY
 - GIESTA
 - LIMA
 - LOPES
 - MARKEY
 - MORAD
-

Massachusetts Gov. Baker signs “Breakfast After the Bell” bill to provide breakfast to 150,000 students in 600 schools

While Massachusetts already requires high-poverty schools to provide breakfast to eligible students, that has left those kids who show up late to school late without a meal.

On Tuesday, Gov. Charlie Baker signed a bill that will help high-poverty schools serve breakfast after the start of the school day – something that could potentially provide breakfast to 150,000 students in approximately 600 schools. Massachusetts Sen. Sal DiDomenico (D-Everett), and State Reps. Andy Vargas (D-Lawrence) and Aaron Vega (D-Holyoke) filed the bills that became the Breakfast After the Bell law.

This means that starting in 2022, any school where at least

60% of the students are eligible for free or reduced meals must also offer breakfast *after* the bell with the option to pick up the meal later in the day and even eat it in class.

The ability to have breakfast before the school day starts is said to not only improve a child's health but improve attendance, the ability to focus or concentrates which will lead to better academic achievement.

State health officials announce season's first human case of West Nile Virus in Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced the first human case of West Nile virus (WNV) in the state this year. The individual is a man in his 50s who was likely exposed to the virus in southwestern Essex County or eastern Middlesex County. The risk of human infection with WNV is considered to be generally low throughout the Commonwealth.

"This is the first time that West Nile virus infection has been identified in a person in Massachusetts this year," said Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel, MD, MPH. "Today's news reminds us of the ongoing need to take precautions against mosquito bites to protect ourselves and our families."

In 2019, there were five human cases of WNV infection identified in Massachusetts. WNV is usually transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. While WNV can infect people of all ages, people over the age of 50 are at

higher risk for severe disease. Most people infected with WNV will have no symptoms. When present, WNV symptoms tend to include fever and flu-like illness. In rare cases, more severe illness can occur.

Information about current mosquito activity will continue to be updated regularly and can be found [here](#).

People have an important role to play in protecting themselves from illnesses caused by mosquitoes. DPH recommends the following precautions.

Avoid Mosquito Bites

Apply Insect Repellent when Outdoors. Use a repellent with DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), permethrin, picaridin (KBR 3023), oil of lemon eucalyptus [p-methane 3, 8-diol (PMD)], or IR3535 according to the instructions on the product label. DEET products should not be used on infants under two months of age and should be used in concentrations of 30% or less on older children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age.

Be Aware of Peak Mosquito Hours. The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many mosquitoes. Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning.

Clothing Can Help Reduce Mosquito Bites. Wear long-sleeves, long pants, and socks when outdoors to help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.

Mosquito-Proof Your Home

Drain Standing Water. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Limit the number of places around your home for mosquitoes to breed by draining or discarding items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty unused flowerpots and wading pools, and change water in birdbaths frequently.

Install or Repair Screens. Keep mosquitoes outside by having

tightly-fitting screens on windows and doors.

Protect Your Animals

Animal owners should reduce potential mosquito breeding sites on their property by eliminating standing water from containers such as buckets, tires, and wading pools – especially after heavy rains. Water troughs provide excellent mosquito breeding habitats and should be flushed out at least once a week during the summer months to reduce mosquitoes near paddock areas. Horse owners should keep horses in indoor stalls at night to reduce their risk of exposure to mosquitoes. Owners should also speak with their veterinarian about mosquito repellents approved for use in animals and vaccinations to prevent WNV and EEE. If an animal is diagnosed with WNV or EEE, owners are required to report to DAR, Division of Animal Health by calling 617-626-1795 and to DPH by calling 617-983-6800.

Information including all West Nile virus and EEE positive results can be found on the Arbovirus Surveillance Information web page or by calling the DPH Epidemiology Program at 617-983-6800.

Completing your census: An easy way to make a lasting difference in New Bedford

The following statement was released by the New Bedford Census Committee:

The count for the 2020 Census is underway and it's critical that everyone in New Bedford participates.

By responding to the census, we ensure that the city has the funds we deserve to support our schools, improve our roads and bolster social services for those in need. Not only do these critical resources depend on a complete and accurate count, New Bedford's representation in Congress is also determined by our census response. This funding and legislative representation is more important today than ever. In the era of COVID-19, the financial support helps cities receive medical testing, masks and other vital health resources that keep us safe.

The census is completely confidential. The results are not shared with any other federal agency or private entity. This is a crucial point, and one that shouldn't get lost amid the din of national debate. The Constitution calls for every person in the country to be counted. Whether you've lived in this country your whole life, or just a few weeks, either way, you still count. The census asks no questions about your immigration status or citizenship.

If you live here, you count. When you fill out the census, include everyone living in your household, regardless of their age. Don't forget to count children, including newborns.

New Bedford has struggled in the past to get a complete count of its residents. As of August 2, the city has response rate of 56 percent, falling short of the national rate of 62 percent.

The city needs everyone to complete the census online at www.my2020census.gov or by phone at 1-844-330-2020. If you need assistance, you can call one of the many help centers listed on the city's website. Census representatives will also be attending a series of upcoming city events, including food distribution and COVID-19 testing sites, to help people fill out their census.

The census only comes around every ten years, which means it

will be another decade before we have this opportunity. Let's make the most of it. It only takes a few minutes, but it will affect the health, education, and quality of life of our residents for years to come. Every response matters, so be counted, and help us get a complete and accurate count.

To those who have already completed the census, we thank you on behalf of our city. If you haven't, there's still time to be heard.

Remember: You have the power. Don't let anyone take it from you.

Make a difference. Take the census.

Lynn A. Coish
Coordinator
New Bedford Complete Count Committee

Gail Fortes
Executive Director
YWCA Southeastern MA

Helena DaSilva Hughes
Co-Chair, New Bedford Complete Count Committee
Executive Director of the Immigrants' Assistance Center, Inc.

Pam Kuechler, Executive Director
PACE, Inc.

Rev. David A. Lima
Co-Chair, New Bedford Complete Count Committee
Executive Minister, Inter-Church Council of Greater New Bedford

Adrián Ventura
Executive Director, Centro Comunitario de Trabajadores
(Community Workers' Center)

Corinn Williams

Executive Director

Community Economic Development Center of Southeastern
Massachusetts

New Bedford announces early voting schedule for 2020 state primary election

The New Bedford Election Commission has announced that Early Voting for the 2020 state primary election will be held at the New Bedford Main Library, 613 Pleasant Street, from Saturday August, 22 through Friday, August 28.

Any voter who wishes to cast their ballot in person prior to Election Day, September 1, may do so at the Main Library during the following hours:

- Saturday, August 22: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Sunday, August 23: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Monday, August 24: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, August 25: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, August 26: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Thursday, August 27: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Friday, August 28: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Voters may cast their votes for: Senator in Congress; Representative in Congress; Senator in General Court; Representatives in General Court for the Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh and Thirteenth Bristol Districts; County Treasurer; County Commissioner; Governor's Councillor; and Register of Probate.

As usual, on Election Day, Tuesday, September 1, polls will be open in the City of New Bedford from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Additional safety requirements including the use of masks/face coverings and the observance of social distancing will be in place due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Any New Bedford resident who is uncertain about their voting status, designated polling location, or who has changed their address since the last election, or any other question should contact the Election Commission office at 508-979-1420.

Massachusetts State Trooper deploys taser and arrests belligerent woman who was allegedly blocking traffic and assaults trooper

Shortly after 10 a.m. today Trooper Stephen Thomson, assigned to State Police-Logan, was on patrol in East Boston. As he was traveling on Maverick Street a female flagged him down and began to speak with him. She stated she was not in distress and did not need assistance and, after a short conversation, Trooper Thomson continued on his way.

After he traveled a very short distance he observed the female in his rear view mirror blocking traffic and yelling at passing motorists. Trooper Thomson then stopped his cruiser and walked back to the female while requesting additional cruisers to respond for assistance.

As he got within 50 feet of the female he observed her screaming and throwing objects at a vehicle traveling on the road. Trooper Thomson then ran toward her and ordered her to the ground. The female locked eyes on Trooper Thomson and began aggressively approaching him. After additional orders to lay on the ground he drew his taser and warned her she would be tased if she did not comply. Once she was within 10 feet, and still approaching, Trooper Thomson activated his taser, causing her to fall to the ground.

After the taser cycle was completed she got back to her feet and again approached Trooper Thomson, this time even more violently. The female struck Trooper Thomson several times in the head and neck, deeply scratching him causing blood to flow. He was able to use defensive tactics to bring the female to the ground. At this point a Good Samaritan, named Isaac, was bearing witness to the events and jumped in to help the Trooper. Isaac was able to assist in gaining control of the female, who was violently flailing her arms and legs while resisting.

After several minutes Trooper Thomson was able to secure the female in restraints, however, she continued to act erratic and violent. Additional cruisers arrived on scene, along with Boston Police, followed by Boston EMS. She was transported to an area hospital and ordered held for psychiatric evaluation. Trooper Thomson was treated for scratches and abrasions, along with treatment for exposure to potential hazardous bodily fluids due to his injuries. The female was issued a criminal summons and will eventually appear in East Boston District Court for the following offenses:

01. Assault and Battery on a Police Officer;
02. Disorderly Conduct;
03. Resisting Arrest; and
04. Assault.

Massachusetts State Troopers uncover large illegal marijuana grow; seize thousands of plants worth millions of dollars

Over the past few days Troopers from the Massachusetts State Police Cheshire Barracks conducted an investigation into suspicious activity at a property on Jackson Road in Savoy that resulted in the discovery of large illegal marijuana growing operation. Troopers from State Police-Cheshire, along with members of the Berkshire State Police Detective Unit, the State Police Narcotics Inspection Unit, a State Police narcotics task force and a DEA agent, seized thousands marijuana plants with an estimated street value of over \$3 million dollars and arrested two men.

The investigation began on the night of July 29, when an Eversource crew responded to a pole outside 72 Jackson Rd., Savoy, to address an electrical problem. Investigation by the linemen indicated that wires had been overloaded and damaged by excessive electricity use from the house, and they approached the residence to speak to the occupant. A male exited the home and, claiming he did not speak much English and communicating mostly through gestures, refused to let the workers inspect the home's electrical hookups.

When the Eversource lineman explained that they had to shut the power to the residence off to conduct a safety check, the man, later identified as YEBIN MAI became agitated and

gestured repeatedly that they could not turn off the power. The linemen made several attempts to explain the situation to MAI to no avail. At one point MAI reached over to the Eversource lineman and placed an envelope in the pocket of the lineman's vest. The lineman saw that the envelope contained \$100 bills. The Eversource employee attempted to give the money back to MAI, who pushed the lineman's hand away. At that point the crew decided to leave the power on, leave the property, and request police presence as they felt there was a potential conflict with the resident.

Troopers from State Police-Cheshire responded. While they were speaking to the Eversource crew, a white 2019 Ford pickup with a New York registration drove down the home's driveway attempting to leave the property. Troopers stopped the vehicle to allow Eversource employees to again attempt to explain the safety hazard at the home. The driver was identified as YEBIN MAI, 28, of Staten Island, N.Y., by his New York driver's license (the man who had exited the house earlier), and kept repeating that he did not speak or understand English. When Trooper Glenn Lagerwall requested that MAI turn the truck off he immediately did so, indicating that he did understand some English. There were two other men in the truck.

An inspection of the home's four outdoor electric meters revealed that metal and wiring in and around the meters was melted from the excessive power being drawn through them. Eversource records indicated the home was using \$10,000 in electricity every month. Fresh burn marks on the wood that encased the meters indicated that there had been a small fire at one point. Determining the situation unsafe, the company cut power to the home and ordered it would remain off until repairs were made and inspected by the town.

Troopers made the following observations outside the house:

- There was a slight smell for fresh grown marijuana near the house.

- While there were no visible ventilation outlets, there were the distinct sounds of multiple fans running in the residence.
- After the power was shut off and the fans inside had stopped running, the smell of fresh marijuana became much stronger around the residence.
- All windows were covered with closed curtains and what appeared to be plywood on the interior of the windows.
- The backyard was covered with debris from what appeared to be extensive renovations in the house. Mixed in with the debris were large green pots used for planting and some large florescent light fixtures.
- Each entrance had a door camera tracking the entrance and exit of anyone using that doorway.
- A worn path led from the back of the house into the woods. At the end of the path was a very large pile of used potting soil, all in the shape of large pots apparently from which they had been dumped. There were roots and stalks in the soil where plants had been harvested. Troopers, through training and experience, knew these to be discarded marijuana roots.

Upon questioning with aid of an online translation app, MAI stated he did not own the house, did not know who owned the house, and did not know why he, a New York resident, was at the house.

Upon consultation with a narcotics detective from the State Police Detective Unit for Berkshire County, Troopers allowed the three occupants of the truck to leave pending further investigation. The envelope containing several hundred dollars that MAI had tried to give to the lineman was returned to the suspect.

Utilizing online property records, Trooper Lagerwall determined that the house had been purchased on November 2, 2017, by a BIN HUANG for \$200,000 cash.

Believing – from the observations of the property and the excessive electrical use at the address – that probable cause

existed that the home was being used as a marijuana cultivation facility, and after determining it was not licensed as such, Trooper Jacob Eugin applied for, and was granted by a Berkshire County court, a search warrant for the home.

On the afternoon of Friday July 31, Troopers from the barracks, the State Police Detective Unit, a State Police regional drug task force, and a DEA agent executed the search warrant and found no one inside the home. Immediately upon approaching the cellar, Troopers detected an overwhelming odor of fresh marijuana. In the cellar they

they found a room full of marijuana plants organized in rows with lights above them. Each plant was in an individual pot. In the room was a network of lights, chemicals, a sophisticated hydro system and an advanced ventilation system. The team then found five more rooms on the cellar, all with almost every square foot covered with growing marijuana plants. Also located in the cellar was a long shelf stacked with hydroponic chemicals and cultivation tools.

The team moved to the first floor and found more rooms containing marijuana plants and other rooms contained supplies needed for growing marijuana.

Troopers located, in the house, bills and mail addressed to BIN HUANG at that address.

The Massachusetts State Police Air Wing deployed to conduct an overhead area search of the building and the surrounding 14 acres of the property. Upon their arrival they conducted several passes over the area but did not find any further evidence of marijuana cultivation.

A total of 3,598 marijuana plants, with a total weight of 560 lbs., were seized from the building and secured by the State Police Narcotics Inspection Unit. The estimated street value of the seized plants is more than \$3 million.

Over the next several days Troopers checked the residence repeatedly but observed no signs that the suspects had returned. But yesterday Troopers developed information that people were inside the house. Trooper William Munch drove past the residence and confirmed that the white pickup and another vehicle were in the driveway. Troopers Anthony Martone and Joseph Pescitelli a short time later observed a white Ford F150 pickup with a New York Registration pull out of Jackson Road and head south on Route 8A. Both Troopers noted the driver matched the description and picture of YEBIN MAI.

Based on the probable cause that MAI had been trafficking marijuana, they stopped the pickup, positively identified MAI, and placed him under arrest. The passenger was then identified as BIN HUANG, 32, of Brooklyn, N.Y., the owner of the residence. Huang was then also placed under arrest based on the same probable cause. (HUANG was not one of the men in the pickup on the first day.)

MAI and HUANG were transported to the Cheshire Barracks for booking.

HUANG indicated he understood his Miranda rights. MAI claimed to not understand English, even though he had previously complied with Trooper Pescitelli's orders stated in English earlier in the stop. Trooper Pescitelli called Interpreter Services Information and was able to get a translator to explain Miranda rights to MAI in Mandarin, and MAI stated that he understood his rights. A bail clerk set bail for \$100,000 each for both men and set a court date for both to appear before North Adams District Court on Friday, August 7.

The investigation into the whereabouts of the other two men who were in the pickup truck with MAI on the first day is ongoing. Their identities are known to the Massachusetts State Police.

New Bedford Mayor Mitchell: Full School Reopening Poses “Unacceptable Risk”

Chris Lisinski

State House News Service

Returning to a fully in-person education model in New Bedford Public Schools would create an “unacceptable risk of an outbreak,” Mayor Jon Mitchell warned in a formal address Thursday where he also touted the city’s local leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Districts are weighing how they will prepare for educating K-12 students starting next months, facing tough decisions compounded by safety risks and concerns about student well-being. Mitchell said in his State of the City speech that city officials are developing plans and “should have some announcements next week.”

“We are mindful that our children’s education has been severely disrupted and that remote instruction, even when the necessary technology is available to all students, is a poor substitute for the real thing,” Mitchell said, according to a copy of his remarks. “A full reopening of schools at this point, however, would pose in my view an unacceptable risk of an outbreak. The reason is essentially that there isn’t enough room or staff to separate out students sufficiently to lower the risk. Feeding and transporting students also become complicated for similar reasons.”

Mitchell urged residents to accept that the highly infectious coronavirus will continue to pose threats for the foreseeable

future, cautioning against rushing to return to pre-pandemic norms and calling a second wave “inevitable” based on the history of past pandemics.

Through Wednesday, 135 New Bedford residents had died as a result of COVID-19 and more than 2,300 tested positive. The city has also felt acute economic impacts, with its unemployment rate rising from about 5 percent in February to 24 percent in May, Mitchell said. The mayor praised city leaders for their targeted response, saying that “we didn’t wait around for the state or anyone else to tell us what we had to do.” He pointed to the conversion of closed nursing homes into dedicated COVID-19 care facilities and local contact tracing efforts.

“Governor Baker’s approach has been appropriately grounded in the statewide data, and there is much to be said for establishing city policies that are consistent with the rest of the State,” Mitchell said. “But sometimes, we have had to calibrate our approach in light of public health data specific to Greater New Bedford, and we will continue to do that.”