

3-31-2020 MMA Municipal CEO's Call:

Providing Sheltering for First Responders and the Homeless and Shelter Reimbursement

- What options are available to help municipalities set-up housing for public safety responders, health care workers, and homeless individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19?
 - Massachusetts has received approval from FEMA to use hotels and dormitories for use as non-congregate shelters, and local governments may do so.
 - Municipalities seeking to house first responders, health care workers, and the homeless in non-congregate settings are eligible for up to 75% reimbursement from the federal government, and may apply for said reimbursement through MEMA's Disaster Recovery Unit [here](#).
 - Further details on eligible costs for reimbursement and guidance on how to submit a cost tracking and eligibility question to MEMA may be found [here](#).
 - MEMA is currently exploring the use of dormitories for housing of first responders.
 - The Covid Command Center (CCC), supported by MEMA, is taking numerous steps to provide housing for those who are homeless and need isolation, including: signing contracts with hotels; bringing in private security; and arranging for cleaning, feeding and all wrap-around services. CCC and MEMA are communicating with shelters regarding what assistance is most needed to support their caring for this population, and will provide resources.

Essential Services

- What is considered an essential business?
 - The Executive Order regarding the closure of non-essential services issued on March 31, 2020 may be found [here](#).
 - The full list of essential services may be found [here](#).
 - A 'frequently asked questions' page regarding essential services may be found [here](#).
- Can you give cities and towns guidance on what is an essential job at the municipal level?
 - According to the Order, for government employees, the employer has discretion to define who is critical. Hence, municipalities shall determine which employees are essential employees.
- Where can municipalities go to have questions answered about essential services?
 - Municipalities with remaining questions may email covid19.biz@mass.gov.

Construction

- What guidance regarding construction as an essential service has been issued since the initial declaration?
 - Revised guidance on essential construction issued under the Governor's March 31, 2020 may be found [here](#).
 - Comprehensive supplemental guidelines for construction sites may be found [here](#).

- Enforcement of the COVID-19 safety guidelines and construction procedures may be found [here](#).

Short Term Rentals and Hotels

- What restrictions on hotels and short term rentals have been issued?
 - Workers of lodging are considered essential only if the lodging is being offered or provided to accommodate the COVID-19 Essential Workforce, other workers responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency, and vulnerable populations
 - Guidance on the limited purposes and uses for which lodging is deemed essential has been issued and may be found [here](#).

Public Records Requests

- Is there any consideration being given to possibly suspending the timeline mandated for fulfilling public record requests during the state of emergency?
 - The issue is on the Administration's radar, and solutions to this issue are being explored.

Other

- Information on efforts to recruit health care professionals to volunteer their services can be found [here](#).
- An online portal to facilitate the donation of Personal Protective Equipment and other medical devices has been created by the Administration and may be found [here](#).
- The Administration has established a partnership with LogMeIn to provide a free 90-day remote working kit to cities and towns to assist with remote meetings and services. The link to access this tool may be found [here](#).

Municipal Permitting

- Does the municipal relief legislation pending also apply to citizens' petitions to amend zoning by-laws?
 - Yes, the requirement that a planning board hold a hearing within 65 days of receiving a proposed zoning ordinance or by-law would be tolled until 45 days after the end of the emergency.

Municipal Finance

- What considerations have been given to providing select boards the authority to access their municipality's stabilization funds, use free cash outside of town meeting, and conduct year-end transfers?
 - These are items which are being discussed and reviewed, and would require legislation.
- What update can be provided regarding changes to local aid and a new consensus revenue estimate?
 - Conversations between Administration and Finance and the Legislature's Ways and Means Chairs are ongoing on this matter, and more information will be provided once available.