



# MMA Update for Select Board Members and City & Town Councillors on COVID-19 and Key Municipal Issues

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A Presentation for the Members of the Massachusetts Select Board Association  
and the Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association  
May 8, 2020



# Today's Presentation

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- Welcome  
(MMA President Cece Calabrese)
- Overview of MMA Activities & Resources  
(MMA Executive Director Geoff Beckwith)
- COVID-19 Orders & Update on State's Reopening Process
- Federal Aid --- the BIGGEST Unanswered Question
- Legislative and Financial Overview  
(MMA Legislative Director John Robertson)
- Questions



# Welcome and Thanks

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- MMA President Cece Calabrese on behalf of the MMA Board of Directors
- Thank you to the Leadership of the Massachusetts Select Board Association and the Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association
- The MMA's membership team is here to help you:  
Director of C&M Candace Pierce ([cpierce@mma.org](mailto:cpierce@mma.org)); Isabelle Nichols for MSA ([inichols@mma.org](mailto:inichols@mma.org)) and Denise Baker for MMCA ([dbaker@mma.org](mailto:dbaker@mma.org))



# Delivering Services Remotely & Virtually

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- Beginning on Friday, March 13, we transitioned all MMA and MIIA employees and operations to remote work, and the MMA office has been closed
- Beginning in March, all in-person meetings and conferences have transitioned to remote or virtual format when possible (using the Zoom platform) – all others have been rescheduled to later dates or cancelled
- MMCA Budget Webinar on May 13; MSA Leadership Webinar on May 20
- The vast majority of our programming has centered on **advocating for tools, resources and legislation** to support the municipal response to the COVID-19 emergency, **connecting local leaders to essential information and resources** to support this unprecedented municipal mobilization, **finding answers to the new and difficult questions that arise**, and **advocating for financial relief**



# Working Closely with State Leaders

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- The MMA is providing the platform, administering and moderating the Baker-Polito Administration's weekly briefings for the Chief Municipal Officer in each town and city by the Lt. Governor and key state officials
- Audio recordings of each briefing are posted on the MMA website at [www.mma.org](http://www.mma.org) and are available to all members
- A detailed summary of each briefing is posted on the MMA website, with links to any new announcements or guidances issued by the Administration
- Unanswered questions are researched by the Administration, and the answers that are provided are posted on the MMA website



www.mma.org is PACKED with information

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We are the voice of cities & towns in Massachusetts.  
We represent 351 cities and towns and the municipal officials who run them.

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MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT  
Local governments shifting gears to continue operations during COVID crisis

Local governments and the services they provide are reliable ports in the storm during times of crisis – performing critical public safety functions, connecting residents with urgent information and resources, and fulfilling responsibilities that keep residents and businesses going until...

READ MORE

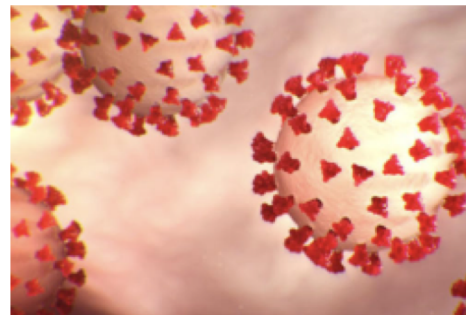
MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT  
Sheltering, testing and fiscal matters are focus of COVID call with state

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT  
Coronavirus news and resources for local government leaders

TheBeacon  
Local, state officials discuss COVID crisis

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT  
Governor signs bill to ease municipal challenges resulting from

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MMA publishes The Beacon online as PDF



MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT  
Coronavirus news and resources for local government leaders

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Coronavirus news and resources for local government leaders

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Latest Updates Guidance for Local Leaders MEMA Situation Updates Local Response Updates Feedback

Governments, agencies and communities around the globe are responding to the coronavirus pandemic. We gathered the information here to help municipal leaders respond and continue their critical operations.

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Coronavirus news and resources for local government leaders

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Latest Updates Guidance for Local Leaders MEMA Situation Updates Local Response Updates Feedback

COVID-19 Command Center Situation Updates, from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency



# Connecting Municipal Leaders

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- Working with our key member groups and affiliates: Mass. Select Board Association, Mass. Municipal Councillors' Association, Mass. Mayors' Association, Mass. Municipal Management Association, Mass. Municipal Human Resources to receive input and direction on program and information needs for local leaders, and to connect peers
- Created a highly used MMA COVID-19 Google Forum for municipal CEOs and HR professionals to share questions, answers, ideas and solutions on COVID-19 challenges across all communities
- Working intensively with MMA's 5 policy committees, with over 100 municipal officials working on the fiscal, administrative, labor & personnel, public works, transportation, environmental, and other aspects of COVID-19
- Sharing ideas and reporting to all via our Alerts, website, Twitter and Facebook (@massmunicipal), special programs, and publishing *The Beacon* electronically



# Key COVID-19 Orders and Guidance

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- The Governor has Issued Dozens of Executive Orders and Guidance Documents
  - Emergency Open Meeting Law Rules and Remote Meeting Procedures
  - Stay-at-Home Advisory, Closure of Schools, Closure of Non-Essential Businesses until May 18, Planning in Process Now for a Phased Reopening of the Economy
  - Definitions and FAQs on Allowed Business Activity (Retail & Golf updates this week)
  - Supplemental Guidance for Municipalities on Construction Safety, Health and Enforcement by Municipalities
  - Federal Disaster and FEMA Reimbursement Eligibility and Process
  - Guidelines and FAQs on Shelters for Homeless Populations
  - Grocery Store Guidance (40% max. occupancy for social distancing)
  - Statewide Face Covering Order
  - ALL THESE – and much more – ARE ON THE MMA WEBSITE at [www.mma.org](http://www.mma.org)





# State Reopening Process

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- The Stay-at-Home Advisory & Closure of Non-Essential Businesses Extended to May 18
- State Reopening Advisory Board will Present a Reopening Plan on May 18
- State Envisions a Gradual, Phased-In Approach Based on Public Health Data & Metrics
- “Essential-Nonessential” will be Replaced with Health Rules & Guidance for Each Sector
- Goal is to Prevent a Second Surge of COVID-19, Reduce Infections & Illness
- MMA Calling for Specific Guidance, Universal Access to Resources, & Clear Authority on:
  - > Seasonal & Special Events, Programs & Services
  - > Municipal Operations, Especially for Public-Facing & Customer-Facing Services
  - > Municipal Enforcement of 3<sup>rd</sup> Parties
- Testing, Contact Tracing, Adequate Time, Access to PPE, Equipment, Technical Assistance



# Legislative & Financial Overview

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- John Robertson, MMA's Legislative Director ([jrobertson@mma.org](mailto:jrobertson@mma.org))
- Key Legislation So Far:
  - Law to Delay Municipal Elections
  - Laws to Address Municipal and School Operational Challenges during the Emergency
  - Further Legislation in Process, Many Unresolved Questions Remain
- State Revenue and Budget Outlook – No Answers Yet for FY '20 or FY '21
- Federal Support and Legislation Still Evolving



# Key Legislation... So Far

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- New Laws to Address Municipal & School Operational Challenges:
  - Delay of Town Elections to June 1 to June 30 Window
  - Allows Town Meeting to Delay Beyond June 30 – Moderator Can Recess TM to 30 Days After Emergency
  - Allows Select Board to Adopt a Temporary Budget to Start FY '21 if Town Meeting Can't Meet
  - Allows Use of Free Cash, Undesignated Balances and Revolving Funds in Temporary Budgets
  - Allows Amortization of any Fiscal '20 Deficit over 3 Years
  - Municipal Executive May Delay Tax Due Dates to June 1 and May Waive Interest & Penalties for Late Payments
  - Municipalities May Not Terminate Essential Services for Nonpayment During the Emergency
  - Provisions to Facilitate Return to Service by Retired State and Municipal Employees
  - Tolls Municipal Requirements to Act on Permits, and Quasi-Judicial Public Meetings and Hearings until 45 Days After Public Health Emergency Ends (the so-called “constructive approval” issue) and Allows Remote Hearings



# Key Legislation... So Far

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- New Laws to Address Municipal & School Operational Challenges (cont):
  - Tolls Timelines for Action on Forest, Agricultural and Recreational Lands until 90 Days After Emergency Ends
  - If a Regional School Budget is Not Adopted by June 30, Allows the School Committee to Adopt a Temporary Budget to Start the Year
  - Allows the Board of Education to Waive or Change June 2020 High School Graduation Requirements (“Competency”)
  - Waives – Cancels – the Spring 2020 MCAS Test
  - Allows the Commissioner of Education to Delay the School District Plans Due as Part of the Student Opportunity Act

# Key Legislation... So Far

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- Pending Legislation (S. 2680) Would Address Some Issues:
  - Option to Reduce Quorums for Open Town Meetings (to 10%)
  - Option for Representative Town Meetings to Meet Remotely
  - Option for Alternate Town Meeting Locations
  - Providing Cities More Time to Prepare Fiscal 2021 Budgets & Enact Temporary Budgets
  - Contract Provisions for Services Not Being Delivered (Municipal CEO Approval Required)
- Other Important Questions Remain:
  - Will Towns Have Resources & Guidance to Conduct Safe Elections During the Emergency?
  - Will Towns be able to Delay Municipal Elections Past June 30, if Desired?
  - Will Cities and Towns Receive Relief from the Public Records Act?
  - Will the State Mandate More Expensive Employee Benefits and “Presumption” Legislation ...
    - MMA Supports Covering 100% of COVID-19 Medical Care for First Responders Through Existing Health Plans and Preserving Their Existing Sick Leave Balances by Adding New COVID-19 Leave During the Emergency
    - A “Presumption” for COVID-19 Would Force Double Payment of All Health Costs
    - MMA Does Not Support Bill to Mandate Time-and-a-Half Pay for Normal Shifts
    - MMA Monitoring New Bills Every Day



# State Revenue and Budget Outlook

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- Still No Clear Answers Yet for FY '20 or FY '21
- Serious Recession is Hitting Massachusetts, Nation and World
- Depth and Length will Depend on How Long the COVID-19 Crisis Lasts
- State & Local Revenues will Fall Due to Economic Standstill
- 1 Million Residents File for Unemployment
- April State Tax Collections Fell 54%, \$2.3 Billion Below April 2019  
(in part due to delay of April tax day)



# State Revenue and Budget Outlook

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- Legislature has Announced that the Fiscal 2021 Budget Process is Delayed
- Administration & Legislative Budget Writers Held New Revenue Hearing to Revisit Revenue Forecast, with \$4B to \$6B Shortfall Estimated
- State Budget Process Unclear (Joint Budget? Temporary Budgets?)
- GOOD NEWS ... \$3.5 Billion in the State Rainy Day Fund should Help to Mitigate Fiscal 2020 Revenue Shortfalls (and Increased Expenditures)
- GOOD NEWS ... Massachusetts Received \$2.67 Billion from the Federal CARES Act to Pay for Unexpected/Unbudgeted COVID-19 Expenses

# State Revenue and Budget Outlook

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- Some History May Provide Some Guidance:
  - In the Great Recession, State Tax Revenues Dropped by 10%, and Unrestricted Aid was Cut by More than 25%
  - Yet Education Aid (Chapter 70) was Not Cut as Deeply Due to Federal Stimulus Aid (ARRA)
- The Key Question is Whether the Federal Government will Provide New Stabilization Aid to Support Local Government
  - The MMA is Working with National Organizations to Call for AT LEAST \$250 Billion in Direct Aid to Cities and Towns During the Coming Recession & at Least the Same for States
  - This would Provide MA Communities with Nearly \$6 Billion for over 2 Years
- Without Federal Aid, the Budget Crisis will be Unnecessarily Painful

.... Now back to Geoff to moderate the Q&A part of our program





# Questions???

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Thank you so much for your time today!

We will do our best to answer your questions now.





# Thank You for Your Leadership!

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- The MMA's Membership team is here to help you:  
With Questions About MSA or MMCA Programming, Please Contact Director of C&M Candace Pierce ([cpierce@mma.org](mailto:cpierce@mma.org)); Isabelle Nichols for MSA ([inichols@mma.org](mailto:inichols@mma.org)) and Denise Baker for MMCA ([dbaker@mma.org](mailto:dbaker@mma.org))
- The MMA's Legislative team is here to help you:  
With Questions About Legislation and Policy, Please Contact Legislative Director John Robertson ([jrobertson@mma.org](mailto:jrobertson@mma.org)) and the MMA Legislative Team
- Use the MMA's Website ([www.mma.org](http://www.mma.org)) and MMA Alerts