



CITY OF FRAMINGHAM

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Op-Ed from Mayor Yvonne M. Spicer:

City of Framingham's COVID-19 Response

Since the global COVID-19 pandemic emerged in March of this year, I, as the Mayor and Framingham leaders, have worked diligently, continuously, and collaboratively with state and local officials daily to proactively address the pandemic and preserve and protect the health and economic well-being of our residents. I have regular conversations with the Baker-Polito Administration to strategize on how best to handle this pandemic for the City.

In March, Framingham immediately and proactively responded, adapting and using existing public safety plans, including the National Incident Management Systems plan. As well, the City launched a COVID-19 website- <https://www.framinghamma.gov/2875/CORONAVIRUS-COVID-19> - that is updated daily with new information and began to introduce several initiatives and steps (reported on the website and in dozens of explanatory documents and press releases) to address the pandemic and protect the residents some of which are highlighted below.

When the pandemic first began, the entire City leadership team including School Superintendent Dr. Robert Tremblay and representatives of the Framingham City Council - Chair George King and Vice-Chair Adam Steiner, our state delegation – a representative from Senate President Karen Spilka's office (Susan Nicholl), State Representatives Carmine Gentile, Jack Lewis, and Maria Robinson, and MetroWest Medical Center CEO Andrew Harding met by videoconference on a seven days a week to discuss what was needed to be implemented for the City to help combat COVID-19. Currently, we meet every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, after which we announce our COVID-19 numbers, new programs, strategies, and tactics that will be used to help residents and lessen transmission.

Recently it's been brought to my attention that some local, politically motivated blogs are portraying the City as standing idle and doing nothing to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Nothing could be further from the truth. You should be aware that Framingham takes actions every day to help control the spread and assist its residents.

Below is a timeline highlighting just some of the strategies and tactics the City of Framingham has taken to protect and provide aid and assistance to our residents and curtail the transmission of COVID-19. We will not stop working to combat this virus. Please take a read of the timeline. I would like to hear additional ideas from you. I can be reached at Mayor@framinghamma.gov.

As always, stay safe and healthy Framingham!

Your Mayor, Dr. Yvonne M. Spicer

Framingham COVID-19 Strategies and Tactics

March 2020

- **Transmission Prevention:**
 - Closed schools, Callahan Center, Library and closed City Hall and Public Works to public access
 - Board of Health restricted in-person meetings
 - Applied for and won a \$200,000 State grant to help with COVID-19 efforts in the City
 - Declared local [State of Emergency](#) in the City
 - Began Contact Tracing Program seven days a week. The Framingham Health Department contacts the people who were potentially exposed and the owners of the businesses or places of employment where the potential exposures occurred to inform and counsel them on next steps (contact tracing).
 - Followed residents in quarantine seven days a week
- **Food Relief:**
 - The Mayor's office, Health Department and Public Schools coordinates a trilingual food donation program to support those who food insecure residents
- **Communications:**
 - Issued first information on staying safe against respiratory viruses, including COVID-19 and guidance on how to protect from the spread of COVID-19
 - Launched a detailed COVID-19 Website to provide updates on the virus for residents and businesses
 - Messaging about how to prevent COVID-19 transmission
 - Began issuing Framingham-specific data on COVID-19 cases
 - Opened Emergency Operations Center seven days a week to answer questions about COVID-19 in Framingham
- **Residents Financial Assistance:**
 - The City delayed late fees on Excise Bills to help those financially impacted by the pandemic.

April 2020

- **Transmission Prevention:**
 - Began to offer newly diagnosed hotel stays to they could better isolate
 - Initiated a cloth face covering collection and distribution program
 - Mayor Spicer and Framingham Board of Health issued a [new order](#) relative to the operations of essential services stating all members of the public two years and older, and employees of essential businesses are to wear a clean face covering such as a cloth face mask, scarf, or bandana over their mouths and noses and practice social distancing.
 - Created a [takeout guide](#) in English, Portuguese, and Spanish to help residents
 - Mayor Spicer issued [an order](#) to not enforce parking restrictions at parking meters to slow the spread of the virus.
 - Health Department temporality prohibited swimming pools at hotels, and condo and apartment complexes from opening
 - City closes Framingham beaches, playgrounds, basketball and tennis courts, track, athletic fields, and Farm Pond parking lot to further encourage social distancing and stop the spread of the virus.
 - Continued:
 - Board of Health restricts in-person meetings

- Contact tracing efforts seven days a week. The Framingham Health Department contacts the people who were potentially exposed and the owners of the businesses or places of employment where the potential exposures occurred to inform and counsel them on next steps (contact tracing).
 - Followed residents in quarantine seven days a week
- **Food Relief:**
 - New in April:
 - Launched trilingual resource – emergency food phone number for those experiencing a severe food emergency to request help
 - Continued:
 - Coordination of tri-lingual food donation program to support those who food insecure residents
- **Communications Tools:**
 - New in April:
 - Messaging about being safe for the Easter holiday
 - Messaging about how to prevent COVID-19 transmission
 - Launched near-weekly Zoom Community Hours
 - Launched a city-wide texting program, subscribers can receive text messages in over 60 different languages
 - Daily press and social announcements about the City's COVID-19 response
 - Set up regular Zooms with the Framingham interfaith community to engage them in the communications effort to fight COVID-19 transmission
 - Health department announces new resource for Spanish and Portuguese speaking populations for COVID-19 Education, Evaluation & More
 - Launched a tri-lingual toolkit for over 100 Community Organizations to share with residents that are receiving support from food providers, family/youth services, schools, seniors, and the interfaith community
 - Continued:
 - Weekly data on COVID-19 cases in the City
 - Issued information on staying safe against respiratory viruses, including COVID-19 and guidance on how to protect from the spread of COVID-19
 - Provided daily updates to the COVID-19 Website for residents and businesses
 - Issued Framingham-specific data on COVID-19 cases
 - Answered questions from the Emergency Operations Center seven days a week about COVID-19 in Framingham
- **Local Business Support:**
 - Established grant program for Small Business that have been financially impacted by the virus
 - Launched a trilingual survey to understand the needs of Framingham's business community
- **Residents Financial Assistance:**
 - Created a temporary financial assistance program, launching in English, Portuguese, and Spanish
 - Deferred late fees on water and sewer bills and real estate taxes until June 1, 2020
 - City waived penalties and interest for certain taxes and fees paid before June 30; directed City Departments not to terminate essential services for nonpayment of taxes or fees related to the COVID-19 outbreak

- **Testing:**
 - Worked with National Guard for testing at Long-term care facilities

May 2020

- **Transmission Prevention:**
 - New in May:
 - City initiated a program to work with long-term care facilities to educate them on how to best avoid COVID-19 transmission
 - Continued:
 - Began to offer newly diagnosed hotel stays to they could better isolate
 - Cloth face covering collection and distribution program
 - Contact tracing efforts seven days a week. The Framingham Health Department contacts the people who were potentially exposed and the owners of the businesses or places of employment where the potential exposures occurred to inform and counsel them on next steps (contact tracing).
 - Followed residents in quarantine seven days a week
- **Food Relief:**
 - Continued:
 - Coordination food donation program to support those who food insecure residents
 - Trilingual emergency food phone number for those experiencing a severe food emergency to request help
- **Communications Tools:**
 - New in May:
 - Messaging about Memorial Day, and protests
 - Launched a mental health and substance use resource page on the City's COVID-19 website
 - Replaced the Emergency Operations Center with a phone line that Residents could call to gather Framingham-specific COVID-19 information. The phone line receives approximately 80-100 calls a day Monday-Friday.

Launched the Reopening Framingham section of the COVID-19 website, outlining different phases, sector specifics, and mandatory safety standards for businesses to reopen.
 - Continued:
 - Messaging about how to prevent COVID-19 transmission
 - Sent out daily text messages with COVID-19 updates, guidance on stopping the spread of the virus, and City offerings/programs
 - Near weekly Zoom Community Hours
 - Press and social announcements about the City's COVID-19 response
 - Weekly data on COVID-19 cases in the City
 - Provided tri-lingual toolkit updates for over 100 Community Organizations to share with residents that are receiving support from food providers, family/youth services, schools, seniors and the interfaith community
- **Residents Financial Assistance:**
 - Continued:
 - Temporary financial assistance program, launching in English, Portuguese, and Spanish

- Deferred late fees on water and sewer bills and real estate taxes until June 1, 2020
 - City waived penalties and interest for certain taxes and fees paid before June 30; directed City Departments not to terminate essential services for nonpayment of taxes or fees related to the COVID-19 outbreak
- **Local Business Support:**
 - New in May:
 - City launched a trilingual questionnaire to learn more about local restaurants that would be reopening with outdoor seating
 - Continued:
 - Grant program for Small Business that have been financially impacted by the virus

June 2020

- **Transmission Prevention:**
 - New in June:
 - Began to reopen certain City facilities in a manner as to protect residents and employees who would be using them
 - Continued:
 - Offer newly diagnosed hotel stays to they could better isolate
 - Cloth face covering collection and distribution program
 - Contact tracing efforts seven days a week. The Framingham Health Department contacts the people who were potentially exposed and the owners of the businesses or places of employment where the potential exposures occurred to inform and counsel them on next steps (contact tracing).
 - Followed residents in quarantine seven days a week
- **Food Relief:**
 - Continued:
 - Coordination of food donation program to support those who food insecure residents
 - Trilingual resource emergency food phone number for those experiencing a severe food emergency to request help
- **Local Business Support:**
 - New in June:
 - Mayor Issues New Executive Order to Aid Local Restaurants.
 - Framingham takes lead in developing initiatives through the Mayor's Office, the Licensing Commission and the Traffic Commission to facilitate and encourage restaurant reopening with outside and socially distanced dining
 - Created free parking zones in downtown Framingham to enable people to more easily engage with restaurants for food takeout
 - Installed temporary 15-min takeout parking signage on Concord Street and Hollis Street
 - Continued:
 - Grant program for Small Business that have been financially impacted by the virus
- **Communications Tools:**
 - New in June:
 - City created new Online Resource - Framingham Restaurant Options for Take Out, Delivery, and Outdoor Dining

- Messaging about staying safe amid ongoing protests
 - Continued:
 - Messaging about how to prevent COVID-19 transmission
 - Near weekly Zoom Community Hours
 - Press and social announcements about the City's COVID-19 response
 - Weekly data on COVID-19 cases in the City
 - Regular Zooms with the Framingham interfaith community to engage them in the communications effort to fight COVID-19 transmission
 - Provided tri-lingual toolkit updates for over 100 Community Organizations to share with residents that are receiving support from food providers, family/youth services, schools, seniors, and the interfaith community
 - Provided updates to the Reopening Framingham section of the website, outlining different phases, sector specifics, and mandatory safety standards for businesses to reopen.
 - Sent out daily text messages with COVID-19 updates, guidance on stopping the spread of the virus, and City offerings/programs
- **Residents Financial Assistance:**
 - Continued:
 - Temporary financial assistance program, launching in English, Portuguese, and Spanish
 - Deferred late fees on water and sewer bills and real estate taxes until June 1, 2020
 - City waived penalties and interest for certain taxes and fees paid before June 30; directed City Departments not to terminate essential services for nonpayment of taxes or fees related to the COVID-19 outbreak

July 2020

- **Transmission Prevention:**
 - New in July:
 - Canceled Concerts on the Green summer concert series
 - Continued:
 - Offer newly diagnosed hotel stays to better isolate
 - Cloth face covering collection and distribution program
 - Reopened certain City facilities in a manner as to protect residents and employees who would be using them
 - Contact tracing efforts seven days a week. The Framingham Health Department contacts the people who were potentially exposed and the owners of the businesses or places of employment where the potential exposures occurred to inform and counsel them on next steps (contact tracing).
 - Followed residents in quarantine seven days a week
- **Food Relief:**
 - Continued:
 - Coordination of food donation program to support those who food insecure residents
 - Trilingual resource emergency food phone number for those experiencing a severe food emergency to request help
- **Local Business Support:**
 - Continued:

- Grant program for Small Business that have been financially impacted by the virus
- Free parking zones in downtown Framingham to enable people to more easily engage with restaurants for food takeout

- **Communications Tools:**

- New in July:
 - Messaging about gatherings and the July 4 holiday.
- Continued:
 - Messaging about how to prevent COVID-19 transmission
 - Near weekly Zoom Community Hours and texting program
 - Press and social announcements about the City's COVID-19 response
 - Weekly data on COVID-19 cases in the City
 - Regular Zooms with the Framingham interfaith community to engage them in the communications effort to fight COVID-19 transmission
 - Framingham Restaurant Options for Take Out, Delivery, and Outdoor Dining
 - Provided tri-lingual toolkit updates for over 100 Community Organizations to share with residents that are receiving support from food providers, family/youth services, schools, seniors, and the interfaith community
 - Provided updates to the Reopening Framingham section of the website, outlining different phases, sector specifics, and mandatory safety standards for businesses to reopen.
 - Sent out daily text messages with COVID-19 updates, guidance on stopping the spread of the virus, and City offerings/programs

- **Resident Financial Assistance:**

- Continued:
 - Temporary financial assistance program in English, Portuguese, and Spanish

August 2020

- **Transmission Prevention:**

- New in August:
 - City closes Skate Park and basketball courts to combat the spread of the virus
 - Department awarded grant to purchase personal protective equipment
- Continued:
 - Offer newly diagnosed hotel stays to better isolate
 - Cloth face covering collection and distribution program
 - Reopened certain City facilities in a manner as to protect residents and employees who would be using them
 - Contact tracing efforts seven days a week. The Framingham Health Department contacts the people who were potentially exposed and the owners of the businesses or places of employment where the potential exposures occurred to inform and counsel them on next steps (contact tracing).
 - Followed residents in quarantine seven days a week

- **Food Relief:**

- Continued:
 - Coordination of food donation program to support those who food insecure residents

- Trilingual resource emergency food phone number for those experiencing a severe food emergency to request help
- **Local Business Support:**
 - Continued:
 - Grant program for Small Business that have been financially impacted by the virus
 - Free parking zones in downtown Framingham to enable people to more easily engage with restaurants for food takeout
- **Communications Tools:**
 - New in August:
 - Messaging about Census
 - Safe voting messaging, created a Voting Portal to keep residents informed of the different voting options available, what to the City is doing to keep voters safe during the pandemic and what residents should expect when casting their ballot in-person in preparation for the State Primary
 - Continued:
 - Messaging about gatherings and how to prevent COVID-19 transmission
 - Near weekly Zoom Community Hours and texting program
 - Press and social announcements about the City's COVID-19 response
 - Weekly data on COVID-19 cases in the City
 - Regular Zooms with the Framingham interfaith community to engage them in the communications effort to fight COVID-19 transmission
 - Framingham Restaurant Options for Take Out, Delivery, and Outdoor Dining
 - Provided tri-lingual toolkit updates for over 100 Community Organizations to share with residents that are receiving support from food providers, family/youth services, schools, seniors, and the interfaith community
 - Provided updates to the Reopening Framingham section of the website, outlining different phases, sector specifics, and mandatory safety standards for businesses to reopen.
 - Sent out daily text messages with COVID-19 updates, guidance on stopping the spread of the virus, and City offerings/programs
- **Resident Financial Assistance:**
 - New in August:
 - Launched contact-free payment methods information as one trilingual document in English, Spanish, and Portuguese
 - Continued:
 - Temporary financial assistance program in English, Portuguese, and Spanish
- **Testing:**
 - City establishes free drive-through testing at Keefe Tech and walk-up testing at SMOC and Amazing Things.

September 2020

- **Transmission Prevention:**
 - New in September:
 - State-supported anti-transmission efforts begin, including COVID-19 response teams undertaking grassroots outreach in targeted areas of the City, and multilingual advertising and messaging support

- Mayor Spicer and the Framingham Board of Health Issue a Joint Order Providing Guidance about the Size of a Party Seated at any Table in a City Restaurant
 - City began Issuing \$500 Fines for Violating the Governor's Order on gatherings
 - City hosts COVID-19-friendly 9/11 Ceremony
 - Continued:
 - Messaging about how to prevent COVID-19 transmission
 - Offer newly diagnosed hotel stays to better isolate
 - Cloth face covering collection and distribution program
 - Reopened certain City facilities in a manner as to protect residents and employees who would be using them
 - City closes Skate Park and basketball courts to combat the spread of the virus
 - Contact tracing efforts seven days a week. The Framingham Health Department contacts the people who were potentially exposed and the owners of the businesses or places of employment where the potential exposures occurred to inform and counsel them on next steps (contact tracing).
 - Followed residents in quarantine seven days a week
- **Food Relief:**
 - Continued:
 - Coordination of food donation program to support those who food insecure residents
 - Trilingual resource emergency food phone number for those experiencing a severe food emergency to request help
- **Local Business Support:**
 - New in September:
 - Framingham Receives a \$714,101 Community Development Block Grant through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Grant to be divided between businesses and residential support programs.
 - Continued:
 - Grant program for Small Business that have been financially impacted by the virus
 - Free parking zones in downtown Framingham to enable people to more easily engage with restaurants for food takeout
- **Communications Tools:**
 - New in September:
 - City begins sending out new messaging to discourage gatherings
 - Continued:
 - Messaging about how to prevent COVID-19 transmission
 - Near weekly Zoom Community Hours and texting program
 - Press and social announcements about the City's COVID-19 response
 - Weekly data on COVID-19 cases in the City
 - Regular Zoom meetings with the Framingham interfaith community to engage them in the communications effort to fight COVID-19 transmission
 - Framingham Restaurant Options for Take Out, Delivery, and Outdoor Dining
 - Provided tri-lingual toolkit updates for over 100 Community Organizations to share with residents that are receiving support from food providers, family/youth services, schools, seniors, and the interfaith community

- Provided updates to the Reopening Framingham section of the website, outlining different phases, sector specifics, and mandatory safety standards for businesses to reopen.
 - Sent out daily text messages with COVID-19 updates, guidance on stopping the spread of the virus, and City offerings/programs
 - Safe voting messaging, to keep residents informed of the different voting options available, what the City is doing to keep voters safe during the pandemic and what residents should expect when casting their ballot in-person in preparation for the State Primary
- **Resident Financial Assistance:**
 - New in September:
 - Framingham Receives a \$714,101 Community Development Block Grant through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Grant to be divided between businesses and residential support programs.
 - Continued:
 - Temporary financial assistance program in English, Portuguese, and Spanish
- **Testing:**
 - New in September:
 - City establishes free drive-through testing at Staples Corporate Offices five days a week. When drive-through testing closed, the City established drive-through testing at Walsh Middle School six days a week.
 - Continued:
 - Free walk-up testing at SMOC and Amazing Things Art Center available five days a week.

October 2020

- **Transmission Prevention:**
 - New in October:
 - City pivots to host Framingham Government Academy via Zoom
 - Continued:
 - Offer newly diagnosed hotel stays to better isolate
 - Cloth face covering collection and distribution program
 - City closes Skate Park and basketball courts to combat the spread of the virus
 - State-supported anti-transmission efforts, including COVID-19 response teams undertaking grassroots outreach in targeted areas of the of the City, and multilingual advertising and messaging support
 - Issuing \$500 Fines for Violating the Governor's Order on gatherings
 - Contact tracing efforts seven days a week. The Framingham Health Department contacts the people who were potentially exposed and the owners of the businesses or places of employment where the potential exposures occurred to inform and counsel them on next steps (contact tracing).
 - Followed residents in quarantine seven days a week
- **Food Relief:**
 - Continued:
 - Coordination of food donation program to support those who food insecure residents
 - Trilingual resource emergency food phone number for those experiencing a severe food emergency to request help

- **Local Business Support:**
 - Continued:
 - Grant program for Small Business that have been financially impacted by the virus
 - Free parking zones in downtown Framingham to enable people to more easily engage with restaurants for food takeout
- **Communications Tools:**
 - New in October:
 - Safe voting messaging, created a Voting Portal to keep residents informed of the different voting options available, what the City is doing to keep voters safe during the pandemic and what residents should expect when casting their ballot in-person in preparation for the Presidential Election
 - Continued:
 - Messaging about how to prevent COVID-19 transmission
 - Near weekly Zoom Community Hours and texting program
 - Press and social announcements about the City's COVID-19 response
 - Weekly data on COVID-19 cases in the City
 - Regular Zooms with the Framingham interfaith community to engage them in the communications effort to fight COVID-19 transmission
 - Framingham Restaurant Options for Take Out, Delivery, and Outdoor Dining
 - Provided tri-lingual toolkit updates for over 100 Community Organizations to share with residents that are receiving support from food providers, family/youth services, schools, seniors, and the interfaith community
 - Provided updates to the Reopening Framingham section of the website, outlining different phases, sector specifics, and mandatory safety standards for businesses to reopen.
 - Sent out daily text messages with COVID-19 updates, guidance on stopping the spread of the virus, and City offerings/programs
- **Resident Financial Assistance:**
 - Continued:
 - Temporary financial assistance program in English, Portuguese, and Spanish
- **Testing:**
 - Continued:
 - Free drive-through testing at Walsh Middle School six days a week and walk-up testing at SMOC and Amazing Things Art Center five days a week.
 - Further potential testing locations under review.