



CITY OF NORTH ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS

Office of the Mayor  
**Thomas W. Bernard**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MARCH 20, 2020, CORONAVIRUS UPDATE FROM THE CITY OF NORTH ADAMS**

NORTH ADAMS, MA (March 20, 2020)

Friends,

We learned today of the first COVID-19 related death in Massachusetts. According to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the patient was a man from Suffolk County in his mid-80s, was hospitalized, and had pre-existing health conditions that put him at higher risk for COVID-19. Other details have not yet been released in accordance with patient privacy laws.

I know that people in North Adams will feel this loss deeply, and offer caring thoughts to the patient's family and friends. I also know today's news may add to the sense of fear and uncertainty many of us are feeling as we reckon with the fact that COVID-19 will be an unwelcome guest in our community for some time to come.

As we grapple to make sense of this news, I also want to let you know about two additional limitations in the services available to members of our community.

The first concerns the curbside service that has been provided this week at the North Adams Public Library. Following recommendations from the Massachusetts Library Association and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, our library discontinued curbside pickup of library materials as of today, Friday, March 20. I agree with library director Sarah Sanfilippo that "stopping this work goes against the work ethic of all library staff, but we feel it would be irresponsible of us to continue encouraging people to travel to the library and exchange materials in the midst of this global health crisis." Read the library update online here: <http://www.naplibrary.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/03/NAPL-closing-services-update-03-19-20.pdf>.

Second, the North Adams Board of Health has notified businesses that provide personal care services to discontinue operations until further notice. This order applies to hairdressers and barbers, nail salons, massage services, bodywork services, and body art (tattoo and piercing) businesses which cannot be conducted while ensuring 6 feet of social distancing. Please note that this order does not apply to licensed health care providers such as, but not limited to, the practice of medicine, dentistry, physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, chiropractors, acupuncturists, and mental health care providers.

I know that both these changes will create further disruption to people's routines. I know they may feel like two more things that are being taken away. I know they come at a time when all we want to do is hold on to every bit of normalcy we can. Leaders at the local and state level are asking and requiring people to make sacrifices, and I appreciate everyone who has stepped up to do so.

Social distancing may seem like an abstract concept, but it WILL make a difference, and it is a way we all can provide support to our medical professionals and first responders who continue to do heroic work in stressful circumstances, and to those in our community most susceptible to COVID-19, especially seniors and the immunocompromised.

In light of these difficult announcements I offer what hope I can to close out today, and guide us into the weekend: through the whirlwind of challenges, adjustments, and changes we have experienced together over the past two weeks, our strong North Adams and Northern Berkshire community continues to assert itself. We are finding new ways to connect and care for one another, but that our shared values of service, support, and sacrifice remain strong.

The North Adams Public Schools provided over 1,100 meals to children today alone, and nearly 2,000 meals this week. Next week they will expand from four distribution sites to five, with a new site at the UNO Center on River Street. And while the food service team has done incredible to work to feed our students' bodies, Superintendent Malkas, her leadership team, and our great teachers are working on new resources to expand the delivery of relevant, accessible online learning in our district.

People are finding creative solutions and inventing new ways of operating. They are reaching out to neighbors. They are supporting local businesses. They are contacting the community liaisons at the Northern Berkshire COVID-19 Operations Center (413-662-3614 or [nbcovid@gmail.com](mailto:nbcovid@gmail.com)) to identify needs and offer resources we will need now and in the future. Our faith communities are using technology to connect their congregations in communion even when coming together in shared sacred spaces is temporarily impossible.

Finally, I want to highlight one example of a group working to serve our community despite changing circumstances. The Al Nelson Friendship Center Food Pantry worked with partners across the community, including the community liaisons at the Northern Berkshire COVID-19 Operations Center to develop a safe, supportive, respectful method to distribute food while maintaining and modeling appropriate social distancing. I want to thank Mark Rondeau and the Friendship Center board for their thoughtfulness and creativity, and for continuing to uphold the legacy of our friend Al Nelson. I know the tradition of service to our community will continue,

despite the challenges that come our way, regardless of the fear and concern we experience, and even when we have to find new ways to show our heart, our resilience, and our caring spirit.

North Adams, Berkshire County, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will continue to demonstrate what President Franklin Delano Roosevelt called “the indomitable will and determination of the people as one great whole,” as we continue to respond to the Covid-19 challenge.

Mayor Tom Bernard