

# MMA Update on COVID-19 for Select Board Members and Councillors

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A Presentation for the Members of the Massachusetts Select Board Association  
and the Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association  
April 10, 2020

# Today's Presentation

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- Welcome by MMA President Cece Calabrese
- Overview of MMA Activities and Resources by MMA Executive Director Geoff Beckwith
- Legislative and Financial Overview by MMA Legislative Director John Robertson
- Questions



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# 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))



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# 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
- From March through June, 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 (MSA June Leadership Conference being reshaped; MMCA April webinar in the works; an all-member Cybersecurity Webinar in the works as well)
- 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, and **finding answers to the new and difficult questions that arise**



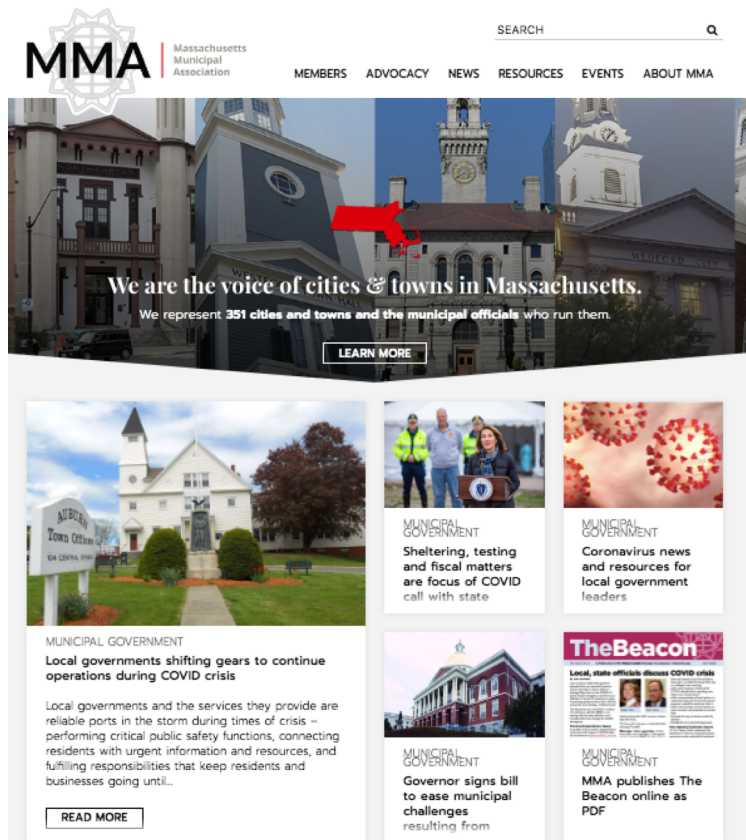
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# Working Closely with State Leaders

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- The MMA has been asked by the Governor's Office to administer and moderate weekly briefings for the Chief Municipal Officer in each town and city by the Lt. Governor and key members of the Baker-Polito Administration
- 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](http://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](#)

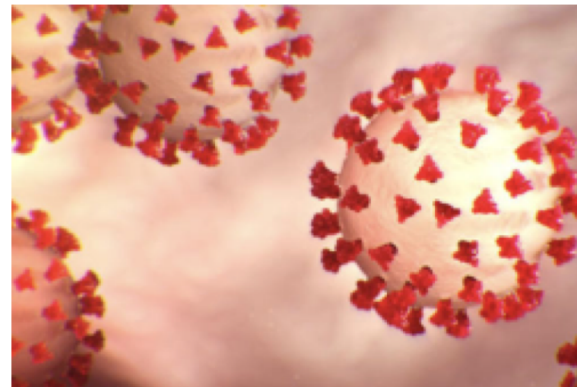
**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT**  
Sheltering, testing and fiscal matters are focus of COVID call with state

**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT**  
Coronavirus news and resources for local government leaders

**TheBeacon**  
Local, state officials discuss COVID crisis

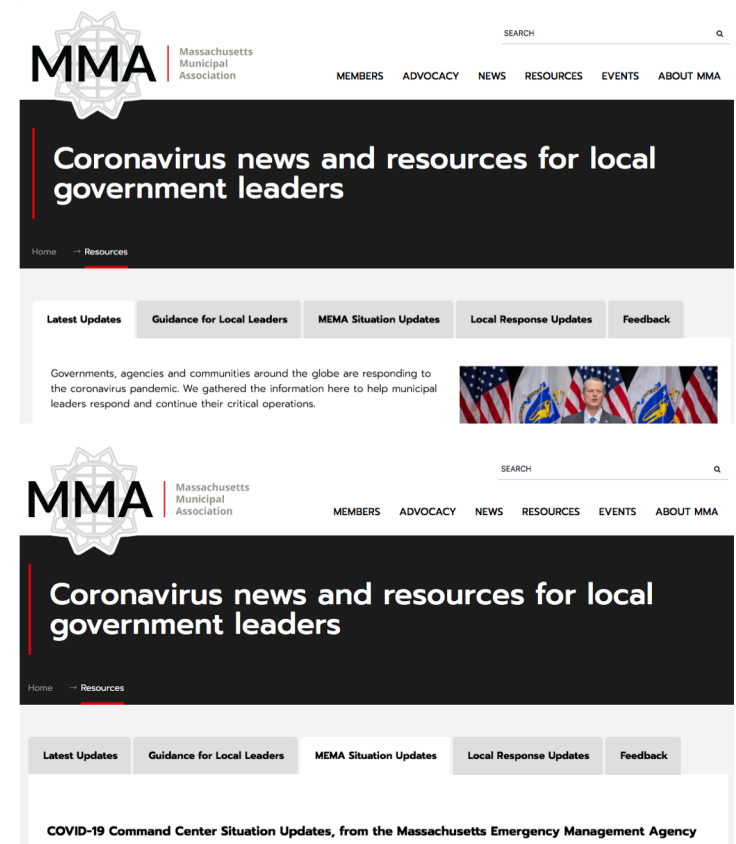
**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT**  
Governor signs bill to ease municipal challenges resulting from

**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT**  
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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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.

[Home](#) → [Resources](#)

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



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# 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



# Regulatory, Legislative & Financial Overview

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- John Robertson, MMA's Legislative Director ([jrobertson@mma.org](mailto:jrobertson@mma.org))
- Key COVID-19 Orders and Guidance
- Key Legislation So Far: Law to Delay Municipal Elections, Law to Address Municipal Operational Challenges during the Emergency, and a School-Related Law Signed by Governor Yesterday, Some Unresolved Questions Remain
- State Revenue and Budget Outlook – No Answers Yet for FY '20 or FY '21
- Federal Support and Legislation Still Evolving





# Key COVID-19 Orders and Guidance

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- The Governor has Issued Fifty Executive Orders and Guidance Documents
  - Emergency Open Meeting Law Rules and Remote Meeting Procedures
  - Stay-at-Home Advisory, Closure of Schools until May 4, Closure of Non-Essential Businesses until May 4 ... Will these be Extended?
  - Definitions and FAQs on “Essential Businesses”
  - 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)
  - ALL THESE – and much more – ARE ON THE MMA WEBSITE at [www.mma.org](http://www.mma.org)



# Key Legislation... So Far

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- Municipalities May Delay Municipal Elections until June 30
- New Law to Address Municipal Operational Challenges
  - 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
  - Tolls Timelines for Action on Forest, Agricultural and Recreational Lands until 90 Days After Emergency Ends
  - Allows Restaurants Licensed Sell Alcoholic Beverages to Sell Sealed Containers of Alcohol with Take-Out Orders



# Key Legislation... So Far

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- A School-Related Bill was Passed by the Legislature and Signed by the Governor Yesterday (April 8)
  - 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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- There are Many Questions and Issues that Remain
  - Will the Signature Deadlines Change for Delayed Elections?
  - Will Towns be able to Delay Municipal Elections Past June 30, if Needed?
  - Will Cities and Towns Receive Relief from the Public Records Act?
  - Will Town Meetings Have the Authority to Meet Remotely?  
(this is mostly for Representative Town Meetings)
  - Will Cities Receive More Time to Prepare Budgets, if the State Budget is Delayed?
  - 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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- 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
  - Capital Gains will Fall Due to Near-Collapse of the Financial Markets
  - Income Tax will Fall Due to Widespread Unemployment
  - Sales Taxes will Fall Due to Near-Full-Stop on Economic Activity
  - Gaming and Lottery Revenues Falling Steeply
  - Local Option Lodging and Meals Tax Revenues will Fall
  - State's Delay of 2019 Income Tax Due Date will Create Cashflow Problems



# State Revenue and Budget Outlook

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- Legislature has Announced that the Fiscal 2021 Budget Process is Delayed
- Administration & Legislative Budget Writers will Hold April 14 Revenue Hearing to Agree on a Revised Revenue Forecast
- Legislature Unable to Meet in Full Session – Budget Process Unclear
- 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 20%
  - But 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 State and Local Government
  - The MMA is Working with the National League of Cities to Call for AT LEAST \$150 Billion in Aid to Protect and Preserve State & Municipal Services During the Coming Recession
  - This would Provide Massachusetts with Nearly \$3 Billion for the State and Localities
- Without Federal Aid, the Budget Crisis will be Unnecessarily Painful

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



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# Questions???

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Thank you so much for your time today!

We will do our best to answer your questions now.





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# 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