Coronavirus in Maine: March 16-20, 2020

Good afternoon. Starting with this briefing, the Maine Municipal Association each Friday will provide weekly updates about the ongoing public health emergency.

We will highlight the week’s developments, primarily from the viewpoint of municipal government. We will promote links, videos and other tools at the Coronavirus Resources area of our website. We will provide municipally relevant summaries from the Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention’s daily briefings, at which MMA plays a communications role.

• The Maine Legislature passed, and Gov. Janet Mills signed, emergency legislation this week enabling local government to keep operating during the pandemic. (https://memun.org/Articles/Article-View/ArticleId/13013/MMA-Important-Legislative-Update#.XnTtondFyUk)

• Recognizing that normal municipal operations have been disrupted, MMA’s Legal Services Department provided guidance on a variety of matters, including how to proceed during town meeting season and about remote meeting participation. (Go to https://memun.org/Coronavirus-Resources, look for the “Legal” subject header.)

• Town and city leaders always learn from each other. We have posted items about action taken in Lewiston, Augusta, Portland, Bangor and South Portland in response to the national crisis. (Use link above.)

• The Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust produced an easy to read guide for municipal employees and employers, with health care and insurance advice (https://www.mmeht.org/coronavirus/).

• Demand on state medical testing professionals, the state CDC and Maine hospitals is intense already. State experts warn that some testing materials could be hard to come by, which is true nationally. They predict that the health emergency will last for quite some time.

• A “mixed bag” update this week was that cruise ship visits to Maine, which were to begin in late April, have been postponed or canceled. That’s one less concern public health-wise, but it is ominous for the 2020 Maine tourism season. (By Eric Conrad, 3-20-20)