

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

JOSEPH A. CURTATONE

MAYOR



MEMORANDUM

To: Interested parties

From: Infrastructure & Asset Management (IAM) with Inspectional Service Department (ISD), and OSPCD (Public Space & Urban Forestry (PSUF) and Mobility)

Date: 7 May 2020

RE: Phased lifting of COVID construction restrictions

Background

Following Governor Baker’s March 23rd stay-at-home order, which included an exemption for construction, Mayor Curtatone and the Somerville Board of Health issued an order to cease all non-emergency construction in Somerville by March 27th with exceptions for efforts to make sites safe and health- and safety-related activities. Statewide stay-at-home restrictions are expected to begin easing on May 18th. As those restrictions ease for the remainder of spring and into the summer, so will the City’s suspension for critical construction.

Somerville’s buildings and infrastructure systems are all approaching the end of their intended lifespans; moreover, many of those systems fail to meet current code as well as regulatory, environmental, and general level of service requirements for a modern city. Somerville’s construction projects, and the gas main replacements being constructed by Eversource and National Grid, are vital to avoid serious risks to health and safety. For these and other reasons, Somerville intends to restart many municipal and utility construction activities, albeit in a very controlled fashion that is acutely focused on preventing the spread of COVID. It should be noted that, as was the case during the March/April suspension, emergency work to maintain services to occupied buildings and protect health and safety will still be permitted throughout the phased implementation. It should also be noted that the City does not have the authority to halt state projects, including GLX and Beacon Street, which, as a result, are exempt from the local construction suspension order and have been continuing with enhanced communication and coordination with the City.

As the COVID pandemic continues, and likely into the foreseeable future, all contractors will be required to complete a Jobsite Hazard Analysis (JHA) and prepare a Site Specific Safety Plan (SSSP) with a particular focus on a COVID safety plan in accordance with state and federal guidelines on COVID spread prevention. In order to reduce risk level, staff workload, and moderate constituent impacts, IAM will manage a phased implementation both in terms of restarting individual projects and in terms of ramping up activities on each project. Two factors influence that plan: each project’s criticality, and each contractor’s capability to implement their SSSP based on experience gained outside of Somerville during the suspension. IAM and PSUF have established the following criteria to evaluate project criticality:





1. **Public Health and Safety** – Is the project/expense required to protect or enhance public safety and/or does the project deliver services to protect or enhance public health, including reducing the risk of infection and providing basic needs including food, water, sanitation, medication, shelter, etc.?
2. **Municipal/School Services Capacity** – Does the project/expense support the City’s ability to deliver other municipal services? Note this is a companion to the criterion above that accounts for needs beyond immediate life and safety and would apply to all asset classes (buildings, roads, parks, etc.).
3. **Federal or State Permit, Regulation, Code, Statutory, or Enforcement Requirement** – Is the project/expense required to comply with external statutory requirements that could result in enforcement actions (e.g. fines, prescriptive operations) and/or revocation of permitted use (e.g. building occupancy)? For parks projects, which generally do not have regulatory drivers, this criterion considers the availability of grant funding that would otherwise be lost if a project does not proceed.
4. **Risk Reduction / Resiliency / Reducing Operational Expenses** – Does the project/expense reduce risk, improve resiliency, or reduce expenses associated with operations or systems necessary for the functioning of municipal government or occupancy of public or private buildings or lands?

The phased implementation plan for construction through the remainder of CY2020 is presented below. Please note that the plan accounts for heavy construction and capital improvement activities. Operations and maintenance activities such as routine athletic field upkeep, tree pruning, or pavement marking refreshment, even if managed by IAM, PSUF, or Mobility in support of DPW, are not included. Those activities have been and will continue to be exempt from the statewide stay-at-home order as essential public works maintenance and operations with direct public safety benefits.

Phase One – 18 May 2020 Start

The first phase of construction remobilization will focus on highly critical projects and contractors who have been working successfully under COVID-management plans on sites outside of Somerville:

- Somerville High School
- Somerville Ave Utility & Streetscape Improvements Project
- West Branch Library
- Eversource Gas Main Replacement
- National Grid Gas Main Replacement
- Prior Years’ Paving Contracts (Medford, Lowell, Powder House, Cedar)

Phase Two – 1 June 2020 Start

The second phase of construction remobilization will focus on critical projects with contractors who have less experience with COVID-management plans:

- Washington Street Water Improvements
- Citywide Sewer Manhole Rehabilitation & Teele/West Davis Sewer Pipeline Rehabilitation





- Prospect Hill Park
- Allen Street Playground
- Private construction (building permits & occupancy permits)

Phase Three – July through September Start

The third phase of construction will focus on highly critical projects currently in the design and bidding phase with anticipated construction starts in the late summer or early fall:

- Buena Vista Garage
- Sewer System Condition Assessment & Risk Evaluation
- Marginal / McGrath Sewer Repair
- Conway Park
- Central Hill Playground

Phase Four – Start To-Be-Determined (may be delayed to 2021)

The fourth phase focuses on projects that have too many unknowns at this time to establish start dates:

- CY2020 Lead Services Replacement Contract
- Various Building Repairs (Engine 7 Floor & Roof, Cummings School Roof & Walls, Founders Rink Walls, City Hall Fire Escape, Winter Hill School Roof)
- Hall Street Water & Sewer Improvements

Postponed Projects – Construction Start Delayed to 2021 Construction Season or After

Given a number of factors, several projects in the design phase that had a potential start date in 2020 will be postponed at least until next construction season:

- ArtFarm
- FY2020 Paving Program (Holland/College/Elm)
- Central Hill Campus Phase I
- Healey School Schoolyard
- Brown Schoolyard
- West Schoolyard
- Henry Hansen Park

Conclusion

The pandemic further complicates already challenging construction projects and conditions, but the City is committed to advancing these critical projects whilst continuing to place the health and safety of all affected as the highest priority.

