

## Town of Auburn, Massachusetts

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Town Manager



### Community Message (November 13, 2020)

Greetings, Auburn Residents, Businesses and Community Members:

Auburn continues to battle the spread of Covid-19 in the community that began nine months ago when the Coronavirus was declared a global health pandemic. Back in March, it was incomprehensible to imagine that Covid-19 would still be a threat going into the winter of 20/21. As science and data evolved over the following weeks and months, it became evident that Covid-19 would continue impact our lives, our health and our economy well into 2021. Residents and businesses have had to adapt, innovate and adjust to a new normal since March. Municipal government has likewise had to adapt, innovate and adjust in order to continue to provide critical and essential services to the public.

Flash forward from March to November and Covid-19 is still in the forefront, with statewide cases rising, as predicted, as we enter the colder months. Auburn's cases continue to climb with a total of 348 cases and 36 deaths since the onset of the pandemic. The Town has had nearly 50 new cases in the last two weeks, a 16% increase in total cases since October 29<sup>th</sup>. Auburn's number of new cases doubled in the past week alone. Most communities in Central Massachusetts have had significant case increases in this two week period, with many far exceeding a 20% increase in total cases to date. Data has shown that the rising cases in Auburn, as well as across the Commonwealth, are primarily attributed to gatherings. As the cases continue to rise, hospitals are also reporting increases in Covid-19 in-patient and intensive care patients. Our hearts go out to those who have lost loved ones and to those who are fighting to survive the virus. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has taken an aggressive approach to curbing the spread of the virus, resulting in 56 Governor's Covid-19 Orders to date, scores of advisories and regulations issued by the State Department of Public Health, and numerous sector guidelines put into place to facilitate the State's Reopening Plan and slowly but safely reopen our economy.

We need help from the community to curb the spread of Covid-19 here in Auburn. Each of you can help by taking extra precautions around your family members and within the community, wearing face coverings and avoiding gatherings as much as possible in the coming weeks. If you start to feel sick, please stay home, keep away from others and contact your doctor for medical advisement. With the steady increase of cases here in Auburn, and to aid our contact tracing efforts, we ask that if you are contacted, please answer the call from the Auburn Board of Health or the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. This will enable us to determine who may have been exposed and how to help those who are COVID-19 positive. These calls are critical to slow the spread of the virus and preventing others from getting sick.

As the holiday season approaches, we encourage Auburn residents and businesses to celebrate in Covid-safe style: participate in low-risk activities; social distance; wear face coverings, limit indoor and outdoor gathering sizes; sanitize surfaces and practice frequent hand-washing. Follow CDC and State DPH guidelines, adhere to the Governor's Orders and continue to be vigilant. Holidays are traditionally a time to gather with friends and family. This year, those celebrations will be different but, with creativity, can still provide an opportunity to communicate and celebrate with those you love in a safe environment. We implore you to keep holiday celebrations to a minimum number of family members.

Please support our local businesses and shop and dine locally this holiday season. Even with Covid restrictions, customers can still purchase local goods and services. Our businesses have implemented safety measures in accordance with State and CDC guidelines. Many offer on-line and/or pick-up options. Also, please consider donating to a charity or organization which provides assistance to those in need. Contributions to or volunteering at food banks, toy drives, and other charitable initiatives are a great way to acknowledge the holidays while helping individuals and families in need during these difficult economic times.

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There will be some changes to the Town's holiday events this year due to Covid-19. The in-person Annual Holiday Tree Lighting event will not be held in its traditional manner due to the capacity restrictions of the State's Gatherings Order. In lieu of an in-person event, we will have a virtual Tree Lighting Ceremony that will be shown on Auburn Cable Television so that residents can enjoy watching from the safety of their homes. We are excited and grateful that Auburn has a new holiday tree - donated by the Auburn Chamber of Commerce – which has been planted next to Fire Headquarters on Auburn Street. We look forward to decorating this tree, and lighting our veterans' parks, to mark the holiday season. Details on this virtual event to follow! We also plan to hold our Annual Light Up Auburn contest. Details will be posted today on the Town's website, ACTV and social media.

The Auburn Fire Rescue Department will still hold its 65<sup>th</sup> Annual Santa Tour. Some minor changes will be made to the Tour this year due to Covid, including keeping Santa safely on the fire truck and those distributing candy from the truck will be wearing gloves. Please refrain from multi-family gatherings and large groups as you await Santa's arrival on your street; we urge residents to enjoy this unique Auburn tradition by remaining on your own property with members of your own household. The Santa Tour can be a safe holiday tradition if residents do not gather in large non-family groups.

The Annual Holiday Craft Fair will not be held this year due to the State's Gatherings Order and other restrictions that prohibit such events under the current Phase 3 of the State's Reopening Plan.

Please know that decisions to cancel or alter community events during the pandemic are not made lightly. These decisions are made based on available data, current regulations and medical advisories from public health professionals and are intended to promote the health and safety of the greater Auburn community.

There is a growing confidence among health professionals and scientists that a vaccine with a 90% effectiveness rate could be ready for distribution over the next couple of months. There is also cautious optimism as the vaccine will not be available for widespread distribution to the general population likely until mid 2021. With rapid advances in medical research and pharmaceutical manufacturing in the United States, there is hope. Hope that a vaccine will soon be available. Hope that the initial distribution to health care workers and the country's most vulnerable populations will begin shortly after the first of the year. Hope that our local, state and national economies will begin to recover. Hope that family and friends will once again be able to congregate and celebrate milestones, events and holidays in-person.

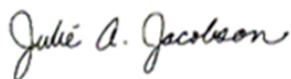
Here in Auburn, our residents and businesses have made many sacrifices over the past several months but the community has remained resilient and strong despite the challenges we have faced. We recognize and understand that everyone is "Covid-weary" and we all dream of the day when our lives will return to pre-pandemic conditions as much as possible.

As we go into the winter months, we want to assure you that your municipal government will continue to provide quality services to the Auburn community and our town officials will continue to provide leadership, guidance and critical information so that you can make informed decisions for you and your family.

Our message to the Auburn community over the past few months may be redundant but it is consistent - and it is vitally important to curbing the spread of Covid-19. We urge everyone to take all necessary precautions to protect yourself, your family, your friends, your neighbors and your customers. Be vigilant, be respectful, and be aware. While these are challenging times, we need to remain focused and intent upon stopping the spread of this devastating virus. Working together, we can keep our community safe and our schools and businesses open.

Happy holidays to you and your families. Stay healthy and stay strong...Auburn Strong.

Warm Regards,



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