

Q&A with Mayor Lee Kyriacou – 23 April 2020

1. How many cases of COVID-19 are in Beacon?

- 1,897 Dutchess County active COVID-19 cases
- 105 City of Beacon active COVID-19 cases
- 32 Deaths countywide (no community details)

2. Are we peaking?

- I'm not a health expert, but that's what the experts are saying about New York City, and that's what the data seems to say about Beacon.
- In the past week, the number of Beacon cases has been in the 90s and 100s – so pretty close to flat. That's a positive sign that we've been doing the right things. But it doesn't change what we must be doing right now.

3. What happens next?

- First, let's take a moment to thank our Governor, who calmly and with facts has led our State in this health emergency. He's a national figure that people truly trust in a time of crisis – with good reason. I want to thank our Governor and County Executive for their calm, fact-based leadership.
- Second, social distancing has worked – and needs to be continued in some form for some time. That said, social distancing has been especially hard on many of our neighbors – small businesses shut, employees put out of work, those who were already struggling – in addition to families dealing with members contracting or losing lives.
- As COVID cases peak and our health workers – thank you – can handle the load and rest a little, we are starting to look to the next stage. That looks to be deliberate, staggered opening up of the community, which will vary by:
 - Upstate/downstate, higher/lower incidence areas; half-capacity businesses; continued social distancing; large social gatherings coming later rather than sooner.

4. Where do I find accurate information on COVID-19? Can I speak to someone?

- The City relies on State and County health information – the State website <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home> has a wealth of information. Governor Cuomo's daily televised briefings <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news#> are very informative; the Dutchess County website <http://dutchessny.gov/> includes a tracker of daily COVID cases by community.
- The City of Beacon website – www.cityofbeacon.org – has links to reputable information sources, as well as Beacon-specific information, listings for food, businesses, help and more.

- The City communicates extensively on:
 - *SWIFT-911*: Which sends out a phone / text / email to those with a landline phone, or if you sign up, a mobile phone or email.
 - *Channel 22*
 - *City Website*
 - *Social Media Posts*
 - *Press Releases*: (though up to the press to report)
- To speak to someone knowledgeable on COVID-19 who can help you:
 - *Medical Issue*: Call a health care provider.
 - *New York State*: COVID-19 Hotline – (888) 364-3065
 - *Dutchess County*: COVID-19 Hotline – (845) 486-3555
 - *COVID-19 Emotional Support Hotline*: (844) 863-9314

5. How can I sign up for your city emergency SWIFT-911 messages?

- We reach the most residents by our SWIFT-911 system. I have done a couple dozen Beacon-specific updates. If you have a landline phone, you get them already. If not, you can sign up to receive by mobile phone call/text and/or email, by signing up on the City website www.cityofbeacon.org/index.php/public-safety-alerts/.

6. Here in Beacon, are we safe? What about essential city services?

- Yes, you are safe (no health guarantees).
- The city's first and foremost job is to **keep civil social going** – to provide the basic safety and services that allow everything else to keep going.
- Unlike so many other institutions and businesses, the City keeps operating 24/7.
- All essential city services are at full strength and operation – we are adapting daily and finding ways to ensure uninterrupted safety and service for the community.
- That means – police, fire, water, sewer, trash, recycling – and more, including City Hall, and (almost) every city service.
- **And we're doing it safely** – each department has health safety protocols in place – which vary depending on extent of public interaction and ability to adjust safely.
- **Thank You**: To all city employees for continuing to serve in these hard times.

7. Do I still reach police and fire the same way?

- Yes; for any emergency – dial 911; otherwise, you can call police at 831-4111 or use the police glass window on the middle level of the Municipal Building.
- *Domestic Violence*: Beacon Police 911 / 831-4111; 24/7 Hotline: (800) 799-7233
- Go to City website to download complaint forms or to request accident reports www.cityofbeacon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/civilian-complaint-form-fillable.pdf.

8. Water and sewer? Trash and recycling?

- Yes, all operating unchanged
- Curbside trash and recycling are on the usual schedule.
- Our recycling facility at the end of Dennings Avenue is temporarily limited to Saturdays from 7:30 – 2:30. For those with free time at home, it's time to clear out the old furniture, yard waste, and the like.

9. Are Beacon City parks open? What about Mount Beacon?

- Yes, with some recent restrictions. We all need at least some time outdoors – safely. The City decided to go the extra mile to keep our parks safe and open. We posted signs on appropriate safe use and social distancing. Police and other city staff regularly monitor our city parks. We found overwhelming compliance with social distancing – great job Beacon residents.
- But last week the Governor ordered open all playgrounds and courts closed, so the City has shut our park playgrounds, basketball courts and skate park.
- While Mount Beacon is state parkland with vast unpeopled nature spaces, its entry points are bottlenecks that need monitoring and management. The trailhead by Bob's Corner Store is owned by Scenic Hudson; they were not staffed to help with active monitoring, and closed their parking lot and trail stairs. NY State Parks is also understaffed locally, and is limiting some other access points. Beacon police monitor, and they report generally good compliance with social distancing.
- Again, you can be outdoors, but you must maintain social distance.

10. Outdoors, do I have to wear a mask?

- That depends. This is new. Starting last weekend, the Governor ordered: **In public, if you cannot adequately socially distance, you must wear a face covering.**
- Note that the Governor's order did not include enforcement – he's trying to balance being safe with strict police enforcement.
- So, if you are alone or only with household members, you do not need a face covering.
- If you go into a confined space and cannot keep six feet apart, you need to a covering.
- In our local grocery store, the posted signs – issued by the State and consistent with the State order – say six-foot social distancing is required. Obviously, the use of plexiglass at the checkout counter is an important element. But each store may go further than that if they choose, may ask customers to wear a covering.
- There's no absolute one that covers every circumstance.
- So, please use your common sense. Be respectful and empathetic when encountering others in public. Don't just do what's easiest or most comfortable for you.

11. What Beacon businesses are open and what are their hours?

- For a comprehensive list of the current operations of Beacon businesses <https://www.storyscreenbeacon.com/post/current-operations-for-beacon-small->

[businesses](#)

12. What restaurants are offering take-out?

- Beacon Restaurants Guide <http://www.cityofbeacon.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Beacon-NY-Restaurant-and-Food-List.pdf>

13. Where can I get food if I'm having trouble with money during this time?

- Beacon Food Pantries and Free Meals Guide <http://www.cityofbeacon.org/index.php/beacon-resources/>

14. How do unemployed workers apply for unemployment?

- NY State's Department of Labor handles unemployment – the website was inundated but was revamped for high volume – <https://applications.labor.ny.gov/IndividualReg/> – and on Beacon's COVID-19 Page <http://www.cityofbeacon.org/index.php/2020/02/26/coronavirus-information-from-dutchess-county-dept-of-behavioral-community-health/>

15. Where do small businesses go for help?

- The County's economic development agency leads on helping local businesses. Go to <https://thinkdutchess.com/covid-19-business-resource-page>.
- There is a new Dutchess Business Notification Network – <https://dutchessbnn.com> – which is a consortium of state and county agencies that provides centralized information for local businesses.
- The Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce – www.dccoc.org – can answer questions by phone or email, has COVID posters for businesses, informational links, and runs periodic webinars.
- All are on Beacon's COVID-19 Page <http://www.cityofbeacon.org/index.php/2020/02/26/coronavirus-information-from-dutchess-county-dept-of-behavioral-community-health/>.

16. Why were you pushing a new way to pay water bills? How do I do that?

- Normally, many **hundreds** pay their water bills and taxes in person; the City Hall / court entrance is tight, and we needed a **safe** process for everyone.
- So we jump-started a **new feature** on the City website for people to see and pay their water bill electronically.
- We steered people to pay online, in the drop-box in front of city hall, or by mail. As a result, we continue to keep the City Hall window open, and can help people while keeping everyone safe.
- So, on our website home page, at the top is a new "Pay Bills" button www.cityofbeacon.munisselfservice.com/css/. It's easy to sign up, and keeps track of water and tax bills.
- There's a fee – 75 cents to pay from a checking account, 3% if for a card

(state law requires us to pass along any cost, but we expect to negotiate a lower price over time.) We've had over 400 sign-ups in the first month.

17. So, City Hall is open?

- Yes. Unlike some local communities, we have never closed City Hall. All in-person interactions occur upstairs at our window for everyone's safety.

18. Are City Council and boards still meeting? How do I find out about them?

- Yes. Unlike the county and many other communities, the City has adapted and kept all meetings on schedule – City Council, Planning Board, Zoning Board, other committees – even the new Main Street Access Committee.
- City meetings use video/tele conference – you can participate online or by call-in. Meeting information is on the calendar at the bottom of our website homepage (www.cityofbeacon.org). Archived meetings are next to the calendar, and agendas and minutes are at www.cityofbeacon.org/index.php/agendas-minutes/.

19. Can we get a permit or license, or a birth certificate?

- Yes. Every type of permit or license that the City usually issues – we can still issue. The process is different – to keep everyone safe. All application forms are on our City website – www.cityofbeacon.org – then mail, e-mail, or use the drop box. It might take a little longer, so be patient. We can help you at the main City Hall # – 838-5000.
- **Dog License:** We do both renewals and new licenses. Note your (dog's) rabies vaccination expiration date. Also note the City dog warden is monitoring our parks – so be mindful of leashes, curbing your dog, and respecting your neighbors.
- **Birth Cert:** www.cityofbeacon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Birth_Application.pdf
- **Job Application:** General Employment www.cityofbeacon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/HR-Employment-Application.pdf; Rec Dept (part-time) www.cityofbeacon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/After-School-Employment-App.pdf; email to cityofbeacon@cityofbeacon.org, mail to Attn: Human Resources, City of Beacon, 1 Municipal Plaza, Beacon, NY 12508, or the drop box at City Hall.
- **Public Bid, RFP/Q:** Respond my mail, email, or drop box as indicated; for questions, call 838-5002 or email egrogan@cityofbeacon.org.

20. What about building permits, or Planning or Zoning Board matters?

- These, too, continue to be available (construction itself is limited).
- **Building Permit:** Download a permit application – www.cityofbeacon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Building_Permit_Application.pdf. For help or questions, call 838-5020 or email jmesnick@cityofbeacon.org.
- **Planning/Zoning Applications:** Download (for questions, egrogan@cityofbeacon.org or call 838-5002) – www.cityofbeacon.org/index.php/permits-forms-fee-schedule/.

21. Can we get married?

- Yes, the City can still issue marriage licenses – we’re adapting the process to be largely by phone or email – and safe. Call ahead of time. (If you already have a license, it will not expire during the current health emergency.)
- And, yes, the Mayor can still perform marriages, and I’m happy to. We can do video conference or a small in-person group (so long as we can arrange social distancing).

22. Personally, how has your life changed, and what do you do with extra home?

- I’m fortunate enough to have a job in NYC that can be performed remotely. So I work remotely, and haven’t commuted to Midtown since early March.
- On the other hand, my city duties as Mayor – even with a full-time professional City Administrator – have grown dramatically. I am at City Hall every day – starting at 7 AM, running flat out through dinner time or Council meetings. I am happy to serve, though tired at times.
- Still, I avoid the long commute, and have more time with family, all of whom are at home right now. So that’s a good thing.
- As for puttering around at home – I’ve been cleaning out file drawers indoors; in the yard, I’ve been a not-very-good gardener.

23. Any final words?

- Maintaining civil society going takes all of us – we keep civic government operating – but civility from all is essential.
- Be respectful to others; be kind; be forgiving – give others a break. Stay well.