



A Message from Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui and City Manager Louis A. DePasquale on the use of the War Memorial Recreation Center, Field House and Garage for Temporary Emergency Shelter

March 31, 2020

Dear Parents / Guardians of Cambridge Rindge & Latin School students,

We wanted to update you on the City of Cambridge's efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic in Cambridge, and our plans to use the War Memorial Recreation Center, Field House and garage ("War Memorial"), which is adjacent to Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, for a temporary emergency shelter for our homeless community.

Before we share more details about our plan, we want to clearly state that the safety and wellbeing of our community is the City's top priority. In conversations with Cambridge Public Health Commissioner Dr. Assaad J. Sayah, he stated, *"I am confident that this plan is safe for our community, neighborhood, students, faculty and staff. The multiagency team that will be operating this temporary emergency shelter has all of the necessary safety, environmental health, and operational protocols in place to keep both users of the facility and the public safe. Once operations cease, environmental cleaning and disinfecting will be conducted in accordance with the standards as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as the Massachusetts Department of Public Health."*

On March 23, the City Manager appointed an Emergency Task Force ("ETF") and tasked the group to identify a temporary location to shelter our most vulnerable residents during the Public Health Emergency due to the spread of COVID-19. After careful consideration and vetting of different options, the ETF determined that the War Memorial is the only site ready and available to serve as a Temporary Emergency Shelter.

The War Memorial already serves as a City designated emergency shelter site and a certified shelter location. It has the physical infrastructure to meet public health needs, including a variety of separable spaces, and secure off street and underground drop off access. The building's existing security design is easily augmentable, utilizing a combination of private security for the interior and a dedicated team of Cambridge Police Officers to provide security for the surrounding area on a 24-hour basis. It is also close to the Cambridge Health Alliance.

Please know:

- No activities associated with the Temporary Emergency Shelter will take place in academic areas of CRLS buildings.
- The War Memorial requires only minimal construction of temporary clinical structures in the facility's sub-level/garage area that can be easily removed.
- Deep cleaning of the entire facility will be conducted quickly to comply with environmental cleaning and disinfecting standards as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

Additionally, we have secured commitments from Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology to supplement additional classrooms for CRLS if school is reconvened in May or June. As Principal Smith noted in a message to the CRLS community

yesterday, this announcement should not be interpreted as a sign that schools will be closed for the remainder of the year.

Given the rapidly changing conditions surrounding COVID-19, we must open this Temporary Emergency Shelter immediately. Addressing the needs of everyone in our community, including our homeless community, protects Cambridge residents, our first responders, and our health care providers from preventable COVID-19 exposure.

As City Manager and Mayor, you have our commitment that education will not be interrupted because of this decision. We will continue to support the Cambridge Public Schools in every way to get through this challenging time.

Very truly yours,

Sumbul Siddiqui
Mayor

Louis A. DePasquale
City Manager