

Town of West Springfield

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West Springfield, MA 01089



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William C. Reichelt
Mayor

18 June 2020

Via Email: ecassidy@thebige.com

Eugene J. Cassidy
President & Chief Executive Officer
Eastern States Exposition
1305 Memorial Avenue
West Springfield, MA 01089

RE: COVID-19 Pandemic & The Big E 2020

Dear Mr. Cassidy:

As you know, the entire world has been affected by the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (“COVID-19”); over eight million people have been diagnosed worldwide, resulting in nearly half a million deaths. In an effort to combat this deadly virus and minimize the effects of it on our healthcare system, drastic measures have been implemented by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to slow the spread of the virus.

As of the writing of this letter, gatherings of more than ten (10) people are prohibited in Massachusetts. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) has opined that COVID-19 is susceptible to outbreak and sustained transmission due to “super-spreading events,” absent public health interventions. Given the current state of affairs in Massachusetts, as well as the continually developing information regarding the transmission of COVID-19, the Town of West Springfield has significant concerns regarding the Eastern States Expositions’ (“ESE”) operation of the 2020 Big E.

It is apparent, given statements made to local news media outlets, that the ESE has no reservations about operating the 2020 Big E, even in the midst of a pandemic. Although Town officials have heard that the ESE is developing a “preparedness plan” for the fair, the details of such plan have yet to be shared with any Town official. Even generalized concepts, such as plans for social distancing, occupancy limits and sanitization have yet to be divulged by the ESE. We have serious concerns about how ESE will be able to

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safely operate such a large-scale event during a public health crisis without endangering the health and safety of the residents of West Springfield and the public at large.

To that end, the Town has created a working group of elected and appointed officials to ensure that all of our concerns about the operation of the 2020 Big E are communicated in a cohesive and efficient manner so that ESE has an opportunity to adequately address said concerns. As an initial step, we have developed the enclosed list of questions regarding the ESE's preparedness plans. We expect that the ESE will provide detailed responses to each of these specific questions, as well as supporting information, including the details of its preparedness plan for the 2020 Big E, so that we may evaluate the information accordingly and communicate what our expectations are with regard to the operation of the 2020 Big E.

Even without having any information in our possession regarding the ESE's preparedness plan, there is no question that, if the event were permitted to take place, the 2020 Big E would not look like the fairs of years past. While we certainly value the Big E as an economic asset to the region and West Springfield in particular, it is our duty to ensure that the safety of our residents is not compromised for any reason, including the financial gains of a private entity. The health and safety of residents is of the utmost importance and we will not entertain the idea of the 2020 Big E unless we are completely satisfied that the ESE has sufficient safeguards in place to protect both our residents and visitors to the fair.

We look forward to the ESE's response and hope that we will be equipped with enough information from the ESE to engage in a productive discussion about the 2020 Big E.

Sincerely,



William C. Reichelt
Mayor



Brian J. Griffin
Town Council President

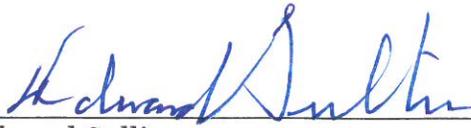


James T. Welch
State Senator

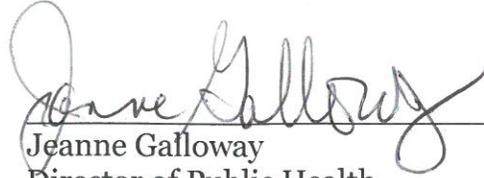


Michael J. Finn
State Representative

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Edward Sullivan Former Mayor
At-Large Town Councilor



Jeanne Galloway
Director of Public Health



G. Paul Connor, III
Police Chief



William M. Flaherty
Fire Chief



Jay Steup
Building Commissioner



Otto Frizzell
Town Clerk

Enclosure

cc: Hon. Charles D. Baker, Governor
Hon. Karyn Polito, Lieutenant Governor
Dr. Monica Bharel, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Marylou Sudders, Secretary, Health and Human Services

BIG E 2020 PLANNING QUESTIONS

General Planning Questions:

- Has any consideration been given to an “agriculture only” fair for 2020?
- Have any materials (plans, guidelines, etc.) been developed by the ESE to outline its COVID-19 strategy for the 2020 Big E? If so, please provide a copy of any such materials.
- Are there detailed plans for cleaning/sanitization? If so, please provide written details of said plans.
- Are there plans to have the private cleaning/sanitization services on the grounds in advance of the fair? If so, please provide written details of said plans, specifically:
 - What is the plan for restrooms?
 - What is the plan for the rides?
 - What is the plan for high touch areas throughout the grounds?
 - How many hand sanitizing stations will there be on the grounds?
- How will residential trailers be handled to meet the current camping guidelines and social distancing measures?
- What is ESE’s communication plan for pre-arrival of vendors, the carnival vendors, and guests?
 - Will out of state or international vendors be required to quarantine for 14 days before the fair?
 - If so, where?
 - Will that information be provided to the state/local health officials?
- What is ESE’s communication plan for ongoing COVID messaging throughout the fair?
- What is ESE’s plan for including mosquito prevention measures in messaging and maintenance activities should West Nile Virus or Eastern Equine Encephalitis be present during the fair?
- Has ESE consulted with any scientists, medical professionals, epidemiologists, etc. regarding the likelihood of the Big E causing a COVID-19 outbreak?
 - If so, are they willing to support their professional opinions via written correspondence?
 - Have said professionals given any opinion as to whether the Big E would qualify as a “superspreading event” (as defined by the CDC)? Are they willing to guarantee that the Big E will not be a superspreading event resulting in a spike of cases?
- What are Baystate, Mercy and surrounding hospitals’ capacity for COVID-19 response?
 - Have they been consulted about the advisability of the fair and the potential for outbreak? If so, what was their response?

- What are the plans to enforce quarantine of employees/vendors staying on the grounds who develop symptoms?
 - Specifically, with regard to attendance by anyone with symptoms within the past 14 days, said individuals should NOT come to the fair. If they are there and fall into this category, they should be told to isolate or quarantine themselves in their trailer (i.e., no traveling the grounds for any reason and no interactions with others who are not part of their family in the trailer).

Occupancy:

- Will a maximum occupancy limit be decided for the entire fairgrounds? If so, what will it be? How was that figure determined? How will it be monitored and enforced?
- Will maximum occupancy limits be decided for each building? How did you arrive at those numbers? How will it be monitored and enforced?
- What will be done to ensure maximum occupancy limits are followed? Specifically, has the following been considered:
 - Limiting the number of gates that are open for entrance and exit?
 - Limiting entry/exit from each building (i.e., designating most as “emergency only”)?
 - Who will be responsible for keeping track of the occupancy of the buildings/grounds to ensure the limits are maintained throughout each day?
 - Pre-sale of tickets?
- What is the plan to avoid congestion of traffic on surrounding roadways for individuals who will be denied entry due to occupancy limits?
- How will housing on the grounds be handled?
 - Will the Moses Building and other dormitory areas be allowed?
 - Will there be any restrictions? If so, what are the restrictions?
- What are ESE’s plans for ensuring the buildings are maintained at acceptable occupancy levels in the presence of a weather emergency?
- How do you plan to handle the state-mandated reduction to 25% of occupancy for all office space?

Complying with Existing State Requirements for Public Places (Social Distancing/Face Covering/Contact Tracing, etc.):

- How does the Big E plan to enforce social distancing?
- How much additional staff will be hired by the Big E to enforce social distancing and face cover wearing?
- How much additional staff will be hired by the Big E to enforce the state’s face covering requirements, both upon entrance and while on the grounds?
- Will face coverings be provided by the Big E?

- What is the Big E's plan for comprehensive contact tracing in the event there is an outbreak associated with the Big E? Will additional staff be hired to effectuate this plan? If so, how many ESE employees will be devoted to this task?
- Will those entering the fair be subject to temperature checks or symptom checks?
- What are ESE's plans for supplying personal protective equipment (PPE) for the first responders (including but not limited to first aid staff, ambulance personnel, police officers and special police officers)?
- How do you plan to maintain proper social distancing during the parades?
- How do you plan to prevent the potential spread of disease through the distribution of "swag" (at vendor booths and during the parades)?
- Are these plans applying to the state buildings?
 - Has the ESE received any plans from any of the state buildings?
- What is the plan for social distancing and sanitization/cleaning in the dormitories? Please provide details.
- What will the impact of "no sleeping in the barn" have on the need for trailer space or dorm space? What is the plan to address these impacts?
- How will the parking lot ATV shuttle work with the occupancy limit on the ATV? Will the driver clean the area between each customer? If so, how?
- Are you prepared to take action against those who do not comply with the face covering guidance? What consequences will be imposed for those who do not comply?
- What will be the ESE's position regarding those who claim they are medically unable to wear a face covering? What will ESE's response be to those who think no one should be excluded from this requirement?
- Is ESE going to modify its booth decorating criteria to account for the need for cleanable items? Please provide details.