



TOWN OF SOUTHAMPTON

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June 13, 2023

PRESS RELEASE

LEGAL IMMIGRANT FAMILY ASSISTANCE IN SOUTHAMPTON

During the past week, officials from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Governor's office have contacted town officials about the former Harley Davidson property on College Highway. They are considering using it as a temporary processing facility for legal immigrant families and pregnant women and even others who might be displaced because of a natural disaster. This is one of a number of sites which the state agencies are considering for use in Western Massachusetts.

We are not sure at this time if this location will be chosen, as the situation is fluid and all the details are not yet fully decided. First and foremost, the property owner needs to agree to temporarily use this property for this purpose. Discussion so far has focused on potential impact on fire/EMS, board of health and Norris school services. What is being considered is a capacity of 100 families (up to 400 people) who would be processed through and out of the facility within a week's time and then moved to more permanent housing around the state. This process would likely continue over a six-month period. Assuming the property owner and the town come to agreement with the state, a contract would detail specific responsibilities and management of the facility. All services for the families would be provided by a third-party vendor(s) engaged by the state. This includes everything from cots, bedding, laundry services, food and overall site management. There would also be portable shower/toilet facilities that would be pumped weekly if not more frequently given the building is not on a sewer system. The facility would be staffed on a 24/7 basis. Unless families are here longer than a week, there would be no impact on Norris school. Should they be here longer, we would need to further discuss placement of children and additional English language services with the state agencies overseeing the facility.

Massachusetts is a Right to Shelter state and the DHCD is obligated to find shelter for eligible families. Per Section 30 of Part I, Title II, Chapter 23B of the General Laws. DHCD currently has approximately 3,600 shelter units across the state, nearly all of which are currently occupied. While DHCD is seeking to expand its portfolio of more traditional shelter settings, the agency has needed to use nontraditional facilities more frequently.

Town officials are in regular contact with state officials as this situation evolves but it is moving quickly and if this facility is chosen, we might have a first group of families in early July. We will continue to provide more details once facts are known.