

Coronavirus concerns slow Weymouth library construction

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Mayor Robert Hedlund said construction at the site began to slow down in late March after the Massachusetts Building Trade Council requested its members to stop working on various job sites around New England to avoid contracting the coronavirus.

WEYMOUTH – The grand opening of the \$33 million Tufts Library has been pushed back to Aug. 10 because of a work stoppage related to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

Mayor Robert Hedlund said construction at the site began to slow down in late March after the Massachusetts Building Trade Council requested its members to stop working on various job sites around New England to avoid contracting the coronavirus.

“Shortly after that, Gov. Charlie Baker issued an emergency declaration on March 23, and the project fell under a non-essential definition,” said Hedlund. “Between the governor’s order and the building trade council, we had other tradespeople follow the carpenters in going off the job. They included the (window) glaziers, along with the electricians and plumbers. The governor issued an order on March 23, and it made the actions of some of the remaining trade employees a moot point.”

Construction of the 50,000 square-foot library has been underway since May 2019, a month after the 53-year-old former Tufts was demolished.

The new building was previously scheduled to be completed in early June.

Hedlund said the library construction committee tried to keep the new facility on schedule by adjusting work plans.

“We got an email from the governor’s office on April 6 and it said all library construction sites in the state should take steps to shut down,” Hedlund said. “It put everything to a screeching halt.”

Hedlund said the work stoppage happened while construction was at its peak.

“The timing of the carpenters union leaving could not have been worse for us,” he said. “The building was sealed up, and there was drywall getting done,”

Hedlund said Baker recently updated his emergency declaration and work can resume at the site.



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“The carpenters’ union has now stated their members are free to go back on job sites that have reopened,” he said.

Hedlund said the library committee is working on implementing a health protocol process with the construction project manager Hill International, on allowing workers to resume work on the building.

“That is in progress right now, he said. “We are waiting for some news on that. The carpenters union said they can go back to work under the right protocols. That does not mean they will be back on the library job tomorrow. We are working on the particulars of that through the construction manager.”

Hedlund said the town had devised a health safety plan, which includes input from town construction manager John MacLeod, the local health department, and state health officials.

The grand opening for the library would occur Aug. 10 if work resumes at the site soon, according to Hedlund.

“That would not include completing the landscaping,” he said. “We are losing a spring planting cycle. Some of the site work and landscaping won’t be done until the fall growing season.”

The new library will have a spacious lobby, cafe, digital media lab, 10 study rooms, expanded resource materials, five meeting rooms for community groups to hold gatherings, and a view of Weston Park, which underwent a \$1.5 million renovation in 2018-2019.

Hedlund said it’s unclear if the work stoppage would impact construction costs for the town.

“There are some legal matters which have to be sorted out along with what type of (construction) insurance definitions fall into play, and how we are considering what the work stoppage resulted from,” he said. “That has yet to be determined.”

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