



City of Des Moines

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 25, 2020

Even during this time of worldwide crisis, the business of our City goes on. I am writing to you today to ensure you that we, as a City, are doing everything we can to continue to provide you and all our residents with the services that you expect, within the constraints established by the Governor and our public health officials. The City Manager has instituted telecommuting for City employees to the greatest extent feasible, and the majority of our employees are working this way.

Despite these unprecedented times, if there is an emergency, our police officers, in cooperation with South King Fire and Rescue, will respond. If there is an issue with the roads that requires action, our public works employees will respond. Permits are still being processed to the greatest extent possible. Consistent with State guidelines, all of the other essential functions of a local government are still occurring. This is all being done in the face of a global pandemic in new ways.

All City buildings are currently closed to the public in an effort to flatten the curve of the COVID-19 virus. We have taken a number of other proactive steps, more information can be found on the City's website.

The City is implementing federal standards for Emergency Management operations. We are working with our first responders to stand up the Emergency Operations Center supporting our Fire and Police.

This Thursday, March 26th, the City Council will meet for the first time since the March 5th Proclamation of Emergency was declared for the City of Des Moines. This meeting is going to be different than normal, but very few things are normal right now. In order to keep the City running, the Council has to meet to review and approve expenditures and other critical items that are necessary for operations. As a Council we need to set an example regarding social distancing. We will be using new technology to ensure transparency, while also practicing the directives of King County Health to limit the potential spread of COVID-19.

Under normal circumstances, Washington state law requires that the Council Chambers at City Hall be open to the public for the duration of the meeting. This creates a problem, as the size of the Chamber, the number of Councilmembers, staff and members of the public do not allow for effective social distancing requirements to be met. As a result of this emergency, the Governor has temporarily suspended these requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act and has prohibited the public from physically attending Council meetings.

The City has recently obtained the technology to allow Councilmembers to attend the meeting telephonically. Additionally for the first time ever, we will for the duration of this emergency, be accepting public comment on the Council agenda exclusively via email and letter. This is intended to promote public participation while still respecting the Governor's "Stay at Home" Order that was issued March 23, 2020. Although the public cannot physically attend, meetings are streamed live on the City's website and on Xfinity Channel 21. Information regarding these and forthcoming options will be on the City's website.

These are challenging times and it is imperative that we persevere and adapt. I encourage all of you to stay informed and do whatever you can to stay safe and healthy. Our community is strong and resilient. I look forward to when we can return to normal operations.

Stay safe,

Matt Pina
Mayor

The Waterland City