

## **CITY OF MANASSAS PARK - STAFF REPORT/RECOMMENDATION**

**REQUESTING DEPARTMENT:** City Manager

**MEETING DATE:** March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**SUBJECT/TOPIC:** COVID-19 City Policy Response

**BACKGROUND:**

Since this agenda was released, much has happened. Please see attached message from the City Manager (Attachment 1). Changes to the below memo will be color coded blue, with one color code red signifying that the action has been taken care of within budget and operational authority.

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) has been declared a Global Pandemic by the World Health Organization as of March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020. It has resulted in a Declaration of a State of Emergency from Governor Ralph Northam on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Around Northern Virginia, schools are beginning to close and governments are weighing policy options.

COVID-19 is from a large family of viruses that cause respiratory illnesses, which was initially discovered in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. It usually causes mild to moderate upper respiratory tract illnesses, like the common cold. It may also cause more severe disease like pneumonia or bronchitis and is usually more common in older adults and people with underlying health conditions that weaken the immune system. Symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, and general unwell feeling.

Public health officials are still learning about COVID-19 and how it affects people. Illnesses to date have varied in severity, appearing anywhere from 2 to 14 days after exposure. The number of deaths, especially in the U.S., remain low when compared to annual deaths caused by Influenza. Those who have died were primarily elderly patients and patients with underlying health conditions. **Again, just to emphasize this point- the most vulnerable populations at this point, in terms of lethality of COVID-19, are senior citizens and people from all age groups who have underlying health conditions that weaken their immune system.** Thus, concern for spread of this disease is the potential impact to these vulnerable populations. Scientists believe that COVID-19 mainly spreads from person-to-person through close contact or respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes—the same way the common cold or the flu spreads. Public health officials, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), and health departments in Northern Virginia continue to closely monitor the outbreak.

City residents are encouraged to check official sources of information with regard to this virus including the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> or VDH website at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/surveillance-and-investigation/novel-coronavirus/> for the latest information on COVID-19. These resources include information about the virus and the factors that put an individual at risk, such as travel to impacted areas of the world. Information on best practices related to personal hygiene and preventive measures in the workplace is also provided. This information will be updated as events unfold. VDH continues to work closely with health care providers in our area to best equip them with the information they need as they see patients (including our employees), as well as to disseminate the most up-to-date information to the public as

appropriate. **Additionally, members of the public with questions about COVID-19 may contact VDH at 703-ASK-VDH3.**

City Staff has been engaging with regional partners and our Health Department for response strategies. Right now the focus from a Department of Health standpoint is on the following:

- Working with the CDC and private partners (LabCorp and Quest) to expand testing capabilities.
- Quarantine of individuals who have been potentially exposed to or test positive for COVID-19.
- Information sharing about preventative measures (hygiene practices)- from the CDC and Department of Health.
- Social Distancing- encouraging people to stay away from mass gatherings.
- Ensuring proper EMS protocols (notifying Health Department of sick patients who have traveled to affected countries per the CDC) and protective equipment is in place (for both EMS first responders and medical professionals).

City Staff's focus based on recommendations from the Department of Health and the CDC:

- Implementing EMS protocols and ensuring proper protective equipment for our employees.
- Workplace Cleanliness- increasing cleaning operations and ensuring use of proper cleaning supplies to kill the virus if present.
- Limiting travel related to work- canceling conference attendance with exceptions authorized by the City Manager.
- Personnel Policy Flexibility- telework and administrative leave for employees with flu like symptoms.
- The City will rely on guidance from the Health Department for determining if and when to adopt a more robust local Social Distancing strategy of closing all public facilities (Community Center and City Hall). For City Hall closures we would need to wait for guidance not only from the Health Department, but the State Elections Board (we cannot impact the elections process).
- Efforts to reach out to vulnerable populations to raise awareness and to provide needed support (example- City Manager, Emergency Management Director, and Fire Chief have visited with the Park Place Senior Apartments and will continue to check up on them to provide support for our most vulnerable residents). [We have established a hotline for senior citizen residents being served every day from 12pm-4pm.](#)

Other Actions Being Taken:

- Until further notice, our Community Center will close when our Schools close to coordinate mitigation efforts. The Community Center will remain open for religious worship services currently renting space.
- [We will be freezing memberships for Community Center Members while closed.](#)
- City Events have been cancelled or suspended until further notice. This will result in the suspension of the basketball tournament this weekend (March 14<sup>th</sup>) at our Community Center and is consistent with regional and national efforts as related to large events including sporting events.
- We are extending the application deadline for Elderly Tax Relief per request of the Commissioner of Revenue as many of our senior citizen residents are responsibly and understandably practicing social distancing to protect themselves from COVID-19.

#### Updated Actions:

- The Community Center will be closed until April 14<sup>th</sup> (aligned with school closures) to protect the most vulnerable population (seniors) who are active users. The Community Center will remain open for religious worship services currently renting space.
- The Treasurer, Commissioner of Revenue and Building Permitting office will be closed to the public except by appointment only. Treasurer will actively monitor dropbox, and will be manning phones actively for payments. City working with Paypal and Merchant services to waive online fees for residents for the next month to facilitate online payments of water and trash bills. If these vendors will not waive the fee, the City should take on these expenditures for our residents- estimated \$12K-20K over the next 30 days.
- We have been actively evaluating options for providing direct support (food) to our Senior Citizen residents who are staying home to protect themselves. Ultimately we would try to support residents who have underlying immune system issues (if feasible) and those who are quarantined due to positive test results for COVVID-19 (coordinated with Health Department). We have reached out to many entities to determine if resources are available to coordinate a consolidated, coordinated and targeted strategy for resources provisions. Unfortunately, resources are limited or not flexible to target to those in need (instead it is a first come first serve provision method – including young healthy people who have little risk of the negative effects of COVID-19). The City will continue to explore options from non-profit and other governmental entities to secure resources for those vulnerable populations and those who have tested positive. The City may need to request community donations as we get more information. The City should be prepared to acquire emergency food and water provisions and seek FEMA reimbursement. The City Manager is requesting spending authority up to \$10K, and to seek FEMA reimbursement post Pandemic.
- Local Declaration of Emergency- in order to be able to secure FEMA reimbursements the City Manager is Declaring a Local Emergency (please see Attachment 2) and is seeking Governing Body ratification.

With these recommendations from the CDC, Department of Health, and regional partners, and after internal deliberations, the City Manager is making the following request from the Governing Body:

- Ratify the City Manager's decision on temporary personnel policy adjustments (see Attachment 3) including granting administrative leave for employees with flu like symptoms to prevent spread of the virus to our employees and residents we serve.
- Expanded cleaning now being taken care of by Parks & Rec Staff, we should not see expanded cost beyond our budget.
- With the closure of the Community Center, the City Manager recommends continuing to pay our part-time employees while they are working fewer hours in order to preserve our employee base (so they don't look for other jobs and not return to us), reduce income burdens resulting from this pandemic, and to ensure we limit the economic impact of this pandemic.
- Authorize the City to provide resources (food) as needed and feasible to our senior citizens, individuals with underlying health conditions, and those who test positive for COVID-19 in our City.
- Authorize the Parks & Rec Department to freeze membership charges to our Community Center customers while we are closed.
- Authorize the extension of the Elderly Tax Relief deadline (April 1<sup>st</sup> currently) to May 1<sup>st</sup>, so that our senior citizens can practice social distancing during the pandemic.
- Authorize closure of the Treasurer's Office, Commissioner of Revenue Office, and Building Permitting Office to the public, except by appointment.
- Authorize waiving of credit card fees to our customers for utility bills until April 14<sup>th</sup> in order to facilitate online payment.
- Ratify City Manager's Declaration of a Local Emergency to respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic with potential Federal Emergency resources or reimbursements.

<b>FINANCIAL IMPACT:</b> No impact from Personnel Cost as already in budget. Unknown at this time in terms potential food aid to vulnerable populations, and credit card charge absorption.	Budgeted:	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
	Amount Budgeted:	TBD
	Amount Requested:	TBD
	Budget Line Item:	Now that the President has Declared a National Emergency, we can seek reimbursement of our financial impact from FEMA after the completion of this pandemic. Line items are being created for this.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

- (1) That the Governing Body approve the City Manager’s temporary personnel policy strategy in response to COVID-19.
- (2) That the Governing Body authorize the City Manager to continue paying Parks & Rec part-time employees during a COVID-19 caused Community Center shutdown based on the average # of hours worked per week within our existing Budget limits.
- (3) That the Governing Body authorize the City Manager to spend up to \$10,000,00 to provide food support as needed and feasible to our senior citizens, individuals with underlying health issues, and residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 in our City, but to first maximize donations and non-profit support before spending City funds.
- (4) That the Governing Body authorize the Parks & Rec Department to freeze membership charges to our Community Center while the Community Center remains closed.
- (5) That the Governing Body authorize the extension of the Elderly Tax Relief deadline, currently April 1<sup>st</sup>, to May 1<sup>st</sup> so that our senior citizens can practice social distancing.
- (6) That the Governing Body authorize closure of the Treasurer’s Office, Commissioner of Revenue Office, and Building Permitting Office to the public, except by appointment to promote social distancing.
- (7) That the Governing Body authorize waiving of credit card fees to our customers for utility bills until April 14th in order to facilitate online payments.
- (8) That the Governing Body ratify the City Manager’s Declaration of a Local Emergency to respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

<b>CITY MANAGER APPROVAL:</b> Approved: _____ Not Approved: _____	 Laszlo A. Palko
<b>CITY ATTORNEY APPROVAL:</b> Required: _____ Not Required: _____	 Dean H. Crowhurst

- ATTACHMENTS:**
- 1. City Manager Message to the Public.
  - 2. Local Declaration of Emergency
  - 3. COVID-19 Personnel Policies

## Message from the City Manager pertaining to COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) has resulted in a Presidential Declaration of a National Emergency today, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Governor Northam has ordered all Virginia Schools closed for the next two weeks. Please check [here](#) for updates from our City Schools. This Tuesday I will be presenting the following [agenda item](#) to the Governing Body laying out the City's response to COVID-19. I encourage you to read through this document for more information about our City response. To read the entire Governing Body Agenda packet, please click [here](#).

Beyond the memo, I wanted to let you all know that the Community Center will be closed next week to coordinate mitigation efforts with our School System and neighboring Recreation Centers. City Events have been cancelled or suspended until further notice. This will result in the suspension of the basketball tournament this weekend (March 14th) at our Community Center and is consistent with regional and national efforts as related to sporting events. We will reevaluate the status of our Community Center next week.

City residents are encouraged to check official sources of information with regard to this virus including the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> or Virginia Department of Health (VDH) website at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/surveillance-and-investigation/novel-coronavirus/> for the latest information on COVID-19. These resources include information about the virus and the factors that put an individual at risk, such as travel to impacted areas of the world. Information on best practices related to personal hygiene and preventive measures in the workplace is also provided.

**If you are concerned about potential exposure to COVID-19 please call your primary care doctor or you may contact the Virginia Department of Health at 703-ASK-VDH3.** Our local Department of Health will be establishing a hotline next week and we will pass along that information to you all as soon as we get it. If you have a life-threatening emergency please call 911. Our Emergency Management Team and Public Safety Employees are ready to serve our community as we navigate this pandemic.

As you may already be informed, the CDC has assessed that COVID-19 is primarily a threat to [vulnerable populations](#). Even if you are not a member of this group, the CDC asks that you practice responsible hygiene practices (e.g. washing your hands frequently for 20 seconds and covering your face when coughing and sneezing) and social distancing (e.g. maintaining your distance from others and refraining from hand shaking) so that you do not infect members of this vulnerable population. When it comes to vulnerable populations, the City Government is prioritizing the safety of our senior citizens during this pandemic. If you are a senior citizen in our City, starting next week we will be establishing a City hot-line for you to reach out to us (providing us your name, address and contact number) so that we may support you over the next few weeks with food and water delivery to your residence. The City is working now to secure supplies to best support our senior citizens so that they can continue social distancing to protect themselves. **Starting next week from 12noon-4pm everyday through the weekend we will be staffing a City Hotline- please call 703-335-8802. Feel free to email us this weekend at [cmp-food@manasssparkva.gov](mailto:cmp-food@manasssparkva.gov) and a member of our City Staff will be in contact with you early next week as we establish our hotline team.** Again, please only call this hotline if you are a senior citizen living in our City or are a relative of a senior citizen calling on their behalf. We ask residents to help us by informing senior citizen resident neighbors of this service and hotline.

For all city residents, please continue to practice social distancing to support the national effort to slow the rate of spread of the virus in order to not overwhelm our healthcare infrastructure. As a reminder, [Influenza](#) (Flu) is still a risk at this time as well and hospitals are already dealing with the negative impacts of Influenza season. Instead of coming to our City facilities in person for the next few weeks, we encourage all residents to call or email the City for the following services:

**Treasurer's Office** for payment of bills (City Utilities, Taxes, etc.) - please call 703-335-8835 or email at [cmp-treasurer@manassasparkva.gov](mailto:cmp-treasurer@manassasparkva.gov). The Treasurer's office will have staff members manning phone lines.

**Commissioner of Revenue** for inquiries about taxes owed or for motor vehicle or business licenses- please call 703-335-8825 or email at [cmp-cor@manassasparkva.gov](mailto:cmp-cor@manassasparkva.gov).

**Department of Social Services** for social benefit programs and to report Child and/or Adult Protective Service cases- please call 703-335-8880 or email at [cmp-dss@manassasparkva.gov](mailto:cmp-dss@manassasparkva.gov).

**Development Services Office** for building permits, zoning, and code enforcement- please call 703-335-8815 or email at [cmp-permits@manassasparkva.gov](mailto:cmp-permits@manassasparkva.gov).

If members of our community are concerned about public gatherings and want to provide public comments at Tuesday's or future Governing Body meetings please email your comments to our City Clerk Lana Conner at [l.conner@manassasparkva.gov](mailto:l.conner@manassasparkva.gov) and she will provide it to our Mayor, Jeanette Rishell, to read aloud at our public meetings. Please provide your name and address when sending your comments so we can read them into the record.

We ask all of our City residents to remain calm, unified, and neighborly during this pandemic and continue to monitor guidance from our Federal, State and City Governments and health professionals from the CDC to our local Department of Health. **Again, please contact your primary care doctor or the Virginia Department of Health (703-ASK-VDH3) if you are concerned about potential exposure to COVID-19.**



## City of Manassas Park, Virginia

### ***DECLARATION OF LOCAL EMERGENCY***

**The City Manager of Manassas Park, Virginia does hereby find:**

- 1. That due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the public is facing critical public health risks and potential devastating economic loss to local businesses, a proclamation of the existence of an emergency is necessary;**
- 2. That due to the potential for community spread of the COVID-19, the City of Manassas Park must take appropriate actions to protect our community;**
- 3. Under the authority of the Code of Virginia § 44-146.21, the City Manager has declared a Local Emergency, with the consent of the Governing Body of the City of Manassas Park;**

**NOW THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY PROCLAIMED that a Local Emergency now exists throughout the City of Manassas Park, VA.**

**IT IS FURTHER PROCLAIMED AND ORDERED that the Comprehensive Emergency Management Program Emergency Operations Plan is now in effect.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Laszlo A. Palko, City Manager**

## **COVID-19 Annex 1: Operations Guidance/Employee Leave and Pay Policies during COVID-19 Pandemic**

In accordance with Section 109 of the [Employment Policies and Practices](#) the City has the authority to organize and manage its human and material resources in order to provide efficient and effective services to its residents and customers. **The following personnel policies are in effect starting March 11, 2020, and will remain in effect until the conclusion of COVID-19 operations or when the City Manager deems appropriate, whichever comes first.** The situation is fluid, and all Department Directors may be required to make personnel leave decisions using their best judgment.

### **Operations**

- Telework opportunities are authorized and managed at the Department Director's discretion as long as City services and or operations are not diminished or hindered
- Flex time is authorized and managed at the Department Director's discretion as long as City services and or operations are not diminished or hindered
- Normal timekeeping and payroll procedures are in effect for telework and flex time operations; Directors are required to ensure they have personnel capable of compiling payroll data for timely payroll processing
- Employees who have recently traveled abroad to impacted countries as so designated by the CDC, should notify their Department Directors and not report to work and instead should remain home for an additional 14 days under Administrative Leave. If an employee is planning on travelling abroad, they must notify their Department Director. Department Directors must promptly notify HR of this travel
- Employees are prohibited from overnight travel for conferences until the City Manager waives this prohibition. Exceptions to this must be approved by the City Manager
- Exempt Employees are subject to recall at any time and are expected to perform work as needed during this period of emergency; Department Directors have discretion in managing their Exempt Employees to meet City operational requirements
  - Under extreme conditions, the City Manager has the authority to authorize Compensatory Leave and or overtime to Exempt Employees at his discretion
- Non Exempt Employees may be recalled to work during non-official duty hours for overtime (at 1.5 times the regular rate for time over the required hours worked in the established work period) and or Compensatory Leave; Department Directors have discretion in managing their Non Exempt Employees to meet City operational requirements
- There are no changes to how part time employees are managed; Department Directors have discretion in managing their part time employees to meet City operational requirements
  - Part time employees may be called to duty at the discretion of the Department Director and shall be compensated in accordance with the Employee Policies and Practices Manual

- There are no changes to how unpaid volunteers are managed; Department Directors have discretion in managing their unpaid volunteers to meet City operational requirements
  - With the exception of the Community Emergency Response Team, Department Directors are encouraged to balance the risk and benefit of having unpaid volunteers during a period of emergency

## Leave

- Employees who can Telework: Employees who are in positions where telework is a possibility, must be on telework or utilize sick leave when showing flu like symptoms. After 14 days of telework, employee will be required to have seen a doctor (doctor's note required) or to utilize sick leave. Employees will need to check in with their Department Directors every day on their status.
- Employees who cannot Telework: Administrative Leave: Until further notice by the City Manager, Department Directors can request that the City Manager waive sick leave usage to direct employees with flu like symptoms to stay home. After 5 days of absence from work, employee will be required to have seen a doctor (doctor's note required). Employees will not be allowed to remain at work if they are displaying flu like symptoms. See next section.
- Sick Leave: If an employee is diagnosed with influenza and/or COVID-19, they will be required to utilize sick leave and follow our FMLA policy if applicable. If an employee has not been diagnosed with influenza, and a COVID-19 test is still pending after 5 days of absence, employee will notify the Department Director who will seek approval from the City Manager for additional Administrative Leave. If an employee does not have accrued sick leave, they will be required to use annual or compensatory leave or will be placed on Administrative Leave if they have no sick leave or annual leave accrued. If an employee is on Administrative Leave, they will not accrue Annual and Sick Leave hours.
  - Employees taking more than 3 consecutive Sick Leave or Administrative Leave days, due to flu like symptoms, may fall under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA); Employees with a documented diagnosis of COVID-19 will most likely fall under FMLA due to the CDC recommended quarantine timeline. Eligible employees are allowed to receive a total of 12 weeks of unpaid leave (or a combination of paid and unpaid leave mentioned above) during a 12 month period for certain family and medical matters. Documentation from a healthcare provider is required
- Holidays: Federal holiday policies remain in effect for all Non-Exempt, Exempt, and part time employees; Employees may be called to work during a federal holiday during this emergency period and will be compensated in according with the Employee Policies and Practices
- Department Directors must notify HR and Payroll of any employees approved for Administrative Leave by the City Manager.