



Gregory P. Kurtz

Mayor

City of Independence, Ohio
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TO: *Council Members*
City Directors

FROM: *Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz*

DATE: *March 27, 2020*

RE: *Administrative Update*

MY WEEK IN REVIEW:

Another week of challenges relating to COVID-19 and the Governor DeWine's Stay at Home order which took effect on Monday, March 23rd at 11:59 pm. As a result of the order which was announced on Sunday, March 22nd, I held an emergency meeting with the Directors and members of my Administrative Team Monday morning to discuss the City's plan of action. As is the case with most municipalities, our two main concerns are to maintain essential services and what can we do to keep our employees working in a safe environment and /or be productive remotely. With all of this in mind, the decision was made to have as many employees work from home as possible, while keeping an appropriate number of employees at our City campus, along with the essential employees of our safety forces and Service Department to continue to serve the public.

As far as keeping our residents informed, I intend to continue sending out updates to you via the City's SwiftReach, in addition to posting beneficial information on the City's website.

Our sources are telling us that the mandates we are currently following from the Governor's Office are likely to continue for a number of weeks. I cannot stress enough the positive impact that reaching out to a neighbor or friend who is either elderly and/or living alone can have. That said, even the smallest act of kindness such as calling someone to see how they are doing and if they need anything, can make a big difference in someone's life. Please make it a goal to reach out to someone you know who may be feeling isolated or alone, or may not be able to go to the store on their own to see if you might be able to ease their burden. It is so important to let people know there are people who care and that there is hope!

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Based on legislation passed this week by the Ohio General Assembly as it relates to the Ohio's Open Meetings Act, we will be consulting with Council to implement a new procedure for Public Meetings that are in line with the temporary provisions of the amended law which we will follow as long as necessary. More information will be forthcoming as the process is firmed up.

As this situation has evolved so has the way we must go to business in our various departments. Please see reports below from our Department Directors.

A MESSAGE FROM DEPARTMENT DIRECTORS:

The Independence Building Department:

The Independence Building Department has made the following changes due to the current Coronavirus situation and the Ohio "Stay at Home" order. While some staff members are working from home, we are maintaining business hours between 8:00 am and 4:00 pm with minimal staffing in the office. To eliminate person to person contact, the door to our office has been locked to restrict public access. We have set up a drop off and pick up area for permit applications, drawings and other correspondence in our lobby. We are continuing to communicate with staff and the public via phone calls and email. Inspections in occupied homes have been restricted at this time. While we are attempting to continue business as usual, please call or email regarding any specific situation, 216-524-1019, building@independenceohio.org.

The Independence Police Department:

The Independence Police Department continues to adapt and make necessary adjustments as the current COVID 19 situation evolves. Chief Kilbane attended a virtual meeting with Governor DeWine and Ohio police chiefs on Friday, March 27th. Governor DeWine recently issued a statewide "Stay at Home" order requiring persons to remain at home except for essential functions. If you have any questions regarding this Order, please do not call 911 or the police department. The Governor's office is requesting that everyone refer to the state's website for these questions. The site can be found at www.coronavirus.ohio.gov. The "Stay at Home" order, social distancing and observing personal protective measures are all crucial elements in successfully navigating our current challenge.

We will be postponing the registration for Safety Town that was scheduled to start April 1st. Once the situation has stabilized we will announce the new registration schedule. The Police Department will continue to respond to our residents' needs and we remain committed to keeping our city safe.

The Independence Fire Department:

Over the past week the Independence Fire Department has been working hard to meet the requirements implemented by the State of Ohio. I can tell you that we are doing our best to stay on top of this evolving situation. I know we are all seeing the number of confirmed cases of

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COVID-19 increase across Northeast Ohio and our county.

What I can tell you is that our Cuyahoga County Emergency Management Department, in conjunction with many other agencies (ours included) is working hard to see that we are prepared now and in the coming days of this coronavirus event.

At present all regional fire departments have the available personal protective equipment needed to respond to COVID-19 calls and we are all implementing new operational policies to keep our personnel as safe as possible during this time.

As we learn on almost a daily basis more about this virus and how it is impacting other areas, we are quickly adjusting and preparing so that we can hopefully prevent it from happening here. Our State has been right on target with the protective actions it has taken and all available options are being considered.

To that end, City personnel have reached out to those residents in the highest risk category for this virus, our seniors. To date we have contacted over 650 residents to see how they are doing and if they have any needs. We were able to address the concerns of a few residents but a vast majority of people advised us they were doing ok. I feel this is testament to our community's willingness and ability to take care of one another.

That said if you have not taken the time to think about being prepared, now is the time to take action. You need to have a personal/family plan of action. Things to think about:

- Are you following the requirements implemented by our State? If not, you should be. Even if you don't feel you are at high risk for getting this virus or having a bad illness, you can still potentially transmit it to someone else. Let's all do our part to follow the rules and preventative steps.
- Do you have enough food in the home to get by for 1-2 week if needed? We still have access to many essential services (food, fuel and home goods), but now is really not the time to be out in public areas with a lot of people, especially, in busy stores. Make sure you have food on hand so you don't have to leave your home as often.
- Figure out what you will do if you or a family member gets ill with this virus. The CDC has information available and now is the time to review it. Go to [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) to review the information.
- Know your primary care providers phone number so you can call them if you start experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you don't have a primary care physician, we have phone numbers listed on our City's website that you can call.

Only call 9-1-1 or go to the emergency department if you are experiencing severe symptoms (chest pain, shortness of breath, etc.). For mild flu like symptoms you don't

need to go to the hospital. Make sure you have some basic over the counter medications on hand like ibuprofen, acetaminophen, cough and cold medicine.

- Make sure you have a support system in place. This could be family or a friend that can help you if needed. If you don't have anyone local then give Community Services a call at 216-524-7373 and let them know how we can help. We will do what we can to help.

These are defiantly challenging times but I am certain we will get through it together. That means stay in touch. I encourage you to call, text or video chat with family and friends.

It's always uplifting during times like this to here from someone.

There are many resources available to keep your spirits up. For example Cuyahoga County Library offers free streaming of music, eBooks and videos. Explore these other free resource to help you pass the time.

Cuyahoga County "Be informed" <https://ready.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/Be-Informed.aspx>

CDC 6 steps to prevent COVID-19 <https://youtu.be/9Ay4u7OYOhA> 1:54 March 13, 2020

CDC 10 things you can do to manage COVID-19 at home <https://youtu.be/qPoptbtBjkg> 1:54 March 13, 2020

CDC What older adults need to know <https://youtu.be/TjcoN9Aek24> 2:25 March 10, 2020

Background history on Coronavirus <https://youtu.be/JKpVMivbTfg> 13:22 March 15th 2020

Independence Mayor's Court

Court personnel are categorically exempt from the Stay at Home order; however, in an abundance of caution, court staff will stagger work days in an effort to maintain social distance and to keep everyone safe and healthy. The Clerk of Court staffed the office this week to perform essential tasks and provide back-up for City Hall phones. Essential tasks include monitoring phones, email, and fax, Bureau of Motor Vehicle reporting, Agency Disbursements, and the Supreme Court Report, some of which will be completed next week. Although the court office remains closed to the public, calls and payments have come in this week from people wishing to clear up citations and license suspensions. The Clerk has been responsive to these requests, making sure that all who paid received the proper documentation from the Court and also forwarded documents to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. The Clerk is also in contact with the Prosecutor to keep abreast of any changes.

Independence Engineering Department

The Engineering Department Team continues to follow the guidelines of the CDC. We have

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placed hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes at various places throughout the office, and continue wiping down common surfaces.

We are vigilant about washing our hands more often, and are maintaining the social distancing recommendation of six feet.

We maintain the practice of encouraging residents and contractors to handle permitting over the phone. We attempt to handle all communications possible by either phone or email, and try to avoid unnecessary physical interactions. We are maintaining significant presence in our office in order to best serve the residents and customers of Independence.

We continue to oversee our numerous and active construction projects around town that are all making good progress during this mild Spring!

Independence Community Services Department

Mayor Gregory Kurtz has requested that the staff at Community Services make calls to all of our residents 55 and over to check in and make sure they are doing ok in light of the Coronavirus situation and the Governor's Stay at Home Orders. He is also looking to see if anyone is in need of assistance.

We are also reaching out to you to determine if you are registered for the City's SwiftReach program which enables you to receive a recorded message with important information from Mayor Gregory Kurtz. All we need is your preferred phone number. To date the Mayor has sent our two SwiftReach messages. If you have not received these messages, please call the Civic Center to be added to the list, or you can go to the City's website to register as well.

This week the staff at Community Services has made over 1000 calls to our residents. A special thank you to Amber, Lori, Claudia, Rita and Marcia for making these calls and for their caring and compassionate concern for our wonderful residents. Our Civic Center doors maybe closed but our hearts are open to all of you. This crisis will not only bring us closer as a Community but make us stronger.

Please keep our elected officials, Mayor Gregory Kurtz, Finance Director Vern Blaze and Council members in your prayers as they continue to lead us during these difficult times.

If you need assistance please call 524 7373 and your call will be returned.

Of course if it is an emergency call 911.

Independence Recreation Department

Per the Governor's request as of late Sunday, our playgrounds were closed and caution-taped off. Prior to the closure, we did experiment with spraying down of the playground equipment down with a sanitizing solution in a backpack sprayer, which worked out well. Sanitizing and cleaning

products were distributed to other departments as requests came in, and additional Purell touchless hand sanitizer dispensers were assembled and installed in the Service Department employee areas. Limited staff worked this past week as needed and was constantly reminded about keeping a distance from each other. Most jobs are one-person details where there is no issue with working in close proximity. Staff continued to answer the department's main phone line and also began answering the Community Service lines as of Tuesday, along with performing the mail runs for all departments and handling any needed requests by residents (prescription pick-ups, etc.)

To help residents stay active at home and maintain exercise options, the Recreation Department staff has been live-streaming video workout sessions on the Recreation Facebook page as well as taping sessions to upload at a later date. An 'Indy Fit' YouTube channel has been established to house these videos, and will be up and running by the weekend. Videos will be uploaded to the YouTube page, as well as posted to the City website and social media accounts.

Service Department

The Service Department has continued to monitor the rapidly changing COVID-19 situation. The department continues to follow sanitary protocols recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Employees have been instructed to follow CDC recommendations regarding proper social distancing, hand washing and sanitization. Our team is reinforcing that employees in the field continue to wear required personal protective equipment, including gloves and protective eyewear.

To adhere to social distancing requirements, the department split the regular work schedules up to limit the number of employees working together on one shift. Currently there are thirty five total employees within the department, 30 fulltime, and 5 part-time. Seven full-time employees were moved to a 12:00 am to 8:00 am shift. The remainder of scheduled employees worked their normal working hours to provide services to the residents.

We continue to restrict visitors from entering our facility to make in person requests or payments.

The Service Department remains committed to you during this crisis. We appreciate your patience and wish you the best during this difficult time.

Additionally, the department will begin yard waste collection on Monday 3/30/2020.

Independence Information Technology Department

Communications:

The City strives to ensure that our residents, businesses, patrons, and visitors are provided with information to put them in a well-informed position and be prepared to adapt to the evolving situation.

Communication protocols have been established to assist the public in filtering through Coronavirus information. Information provided by the City is centralized through our Coronavirus page on the City website at

https://www.independenceohio.org/government/mayor_s_office/coronavirus.php

The latest Coronavirus information includes:

Official resources from the State of Ohio o CDC Updates

- o Public Health Orders
- o News Releases
- o Stay At Home Information
- o Closures
- o Educational Videos

- Local Business Information including special provisions and offerings
- Weekly SwiftReach Public Service Announcements from the Mayor

City Employee Provisions:

As we all adapt to the stay at home order, the practice of precautionary measures, and following the social distancing guidelines, provisions have been made to ensure the safety of City employees.

- Isolated work environments and workstations
- Remote computer station connectivity
- Teleconferencing
- Cellular accessibility
- Special call handling and call routing

Cybersecurity Measures:

The public precautionary measures to adapt to changing workplaces and home environments, along with proactive responses to the situation brings along certain vulnerability. Some cyber threat actors are now attempting to capitalize on the situation by disseminating attacks through email, text and web communications. These actors are also attempting to leverage the

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emergency remote access deployed to many businesses and government workers. Special security measures and protocols have been put into place to ensure the integrity and resiliency of the City computing network both on the campus and remotely. We ask that you remain vigilant in navigating information online via emails, links, social media posts, text messages, and phone calls in a collaborative effort to limit the exposure for all of us from cyber threats.

Independence Technical Services Department:

Technical Services has been busy completing various projects this week while conforming with the Governor's mandates.

CITY NOW HIRING SEASONAL EMPLOYEES:

The City of Independence is now accepting applications for a variety of rewarding part-time and full-time opportunities:

- Community Services Department - Summer Camp and Playground (part-time) Counselors
- Service Department – Laborers
- Recreation Department – Lifeguards (indoor and outdoor pools); Pool Concessions and Front Desk; Pool Maintenance Technician

Applicants must be reliable, energetic, self-motivated and have strong customer service skills. All positions require successful passage of a drug screen and background check. If you are interested or know of someone who is looking for work this summer, please direct them to the City of Independence website to apply online at www.independenceohio.org.

Have a great weekend!