



Gregory P. Kurtz

Mayor

City of Independence, Ohio
6800 BRECKSVILLE RD INDEPENDENCE, OHIO 44131

Administrative Update for May 22, 2020

COMBATING COVID-19

A Strategic Planning and Special Council Meeting were held on May 19th to discuss how the City is managing COVID-19 and planning for the future.

Independence, like all cities, is being tested by this health/social/economic crisis. The pandemic has upended everyone's lives and affected how the City functions for residents and the business community.



Multiple teams within the administration are working to institute a long-list of state mandates and City-specific hygiene and safety protocols. There are many considerations, including new cleaning and sanitizing standards and schedules. We need to hire summer employees and train them and the current staff on how to enforce safety and social distancing rules. We must be nimble and smart. Opening prematurely could take us back to the situation that led to the initial shutdown last March – no one wants that.

The City will reinforce our policy that all amenities and recreation facilities are for residents only. I will let you know as soon as possible when we are ready to safely open the Civic Center, outdoor pool, playground, and begin summer day camp.

We are staying ahead of the health emergency as much as possible so that we do not cancel events unnecessarily. Monday's Memorial Day Service will not include a parade but will be respectful and dignified. The annual 4th of July Party in the Park has been postponed. Home Days will need to be modified, and it is too soon to make a call about the Summer Concert series.

Independence must maintain a leadership role and capitalize on its unique geographic and demographic advantages. We need to develop bold strategies to work with the emerging post-pandemic business model to stabilize, support, and grow the local economy. It is important for the City to raise the level of service we provide businesses. The virus is expected to significantly transform the commercial office space market as companies begin to trim budgets and look for ways to improve

productivity. We must be open to repurposing some parts of the City, re-imagining the Rockside Road area, and at the same time protect the quality of life for residents.

VIRTUAL COURT PROCEEDINGS

Congratulations to the Clerk of Courts Angie Zidanic and her team for successfully planning and holding the city's first-ever virtual court hearings. I am proud of the forward-thinking and diligent work by the staff to adapt to the coronavirus pandemic's challenges.

The Sun News recognized the team in [“Independence, Garfield Heights courts go digital during coronavirus crisis.”](#)



L-R: Cindy Metz, Angie Zidanic, Cathy Turkovic

Working closely with Prosecutor Bud Doyle, the Mayor's Court staff developed a system to notify offenders of waiverable citations, mandatory court appearances, and arranged Zoom hearings for OVI cases.

Garfield Heights Municipal Court Judge Deborah Nicastro uses and supports technology in the courtroom, and graciously shared her knowledge with the city prosecutor and clerk.

The Mayor's Court team is strictly following guidance provided by the Supreme Court of Ohio and the Governor's Responsible RestartOhio plan to protect court employees and the public. It includes using technology for hearings, offering more self-service options on the website, and practicing social distancing through telework and rotating office schedules.

Several cities have contacted Zidanic to get information on how they can establish virtual Mayor's Court hearings in their communities.

COMMUNITY SHRED DAY

Sunday's Community Shred Day was a huge success. Residents shredded 16,400 pounds of documents. At one point, traffic was backed up to Brecksville Road as people pulled up to the trucks parked in the City Hall parking lot.



OLDER AMERICANS MONTH

As “Older Americans Month” begins to wind down, the Community Services staff has produced a slideshow to honor our senior residents. [You can view the video here.](#) It is also posted on the homepage of the City’s website.



Community

Independence starts pen pal program for senior citizens during quarantine

Updated May 16, 2020; Posted May 16, 2020

Independence Mayor Greg Kurtz sends a letter to a senior using the new mailbox for the Indy Pen Pals program. (Photo courtesy of Alla Lora)

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Cleveland.com reported on the Indy Pen Pal program on May 16th. You can [read the full story here.](#)

MEMORIAL DAY

A reminder that this year's Memorial Day services will be held on the Public Square Monday starting at 9:30 AM. There will be no parade, and everyone who attends will be required to social distance. Limited seating will be available.

A video of the services will be posted on the homepage of the City's website on Monday afternoon.

In observance of Memorial Day, City Hall and the Service Department will be closed. If Monday is your regular rubbish day, next week, it is Tuesday.

