



# *Gregory P. Kurtz*

Mayor

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

**FROM:** *Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz*

**DATE:** *March 20, 2020*

**RE:** *Administrative Update*

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## **MY WEEK IN REVIEW:**

Another week of challenges as the situation with COVID-19 evolves. My administration has been communicating on a daily basis to keep abreast of any updates and the necessary steps we need to take to protect our employees and the public during this unprecedented time period.

As far as keeping our residents informed, I will be sending out SwiftReach messages as often as is necessary to disseminate important information. In addition, we will continue to post beneficial information on the City's website.

I would like to **thank** the hard working and dedicated City employees for their continued service and commitment to our residents and business community, as well as those passing through our city.

We have also been in constant contact with county and state officials as we navigate these uncharted waters together. One area under review deals with remote meetings and the ability of elected officials to make legally binding decisions. Some communities have invoked emergency powers in an effort to maintain safety and hygiene protocols while at the same time allowing communities the ability to continue to operate.

In regards to our City Departments, I have given all Department Directors the latitude to modify their processes and how they communicate with the public to provide the safest environment possible for their employees and patrons.

Please see the changes implemented in each department as follows.

***A MESSAGE FROM DEPARTMENT DIRECTORS:***

**Building Department:**

The Independence Building Department has made the following changes due to the current Coronavirus situation. We are currently maintaining the same business hours. However, the door to our office has been locked to restrict public access. In our lobby, we have set up a drop off and pick up area for permit applications, drawings and other correspondence. We are continuing to communicate via phone calls and email. Inspections in occupied homes have been restricted. While we are attempting to continue business as usual, please call 216-524-1019 or email regarding any specific situation ([building@independenceohio.org](mailto:building@independenceohio.org)).

**Police Department:**

Mayor Kurtz and his entire leadership team are completely committed to continue providing the high-level services and support that our citizens deserve. Public safety remains a top priority, and your police department will continue to adopt the best practices available to address this challenging and rapidly-changing situation. You will see an increased patrol presence throughout the city and any situations that require an immediate police response will be met with the same quick and effective response that has always been a hallmark of the Independence Police Department. There have been some operational changes to our non-emergency and administrative operations designed to limit potential exposure and interaction between our staff and members of the public. As always, please call 911 in the case of an emergency, and 216-524-1234 for non-emergency or information issues. Many non-emergency reports and administrative transactions will now be handled remotely via phone or email. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to call us at 216-524-1234, that number will be answered 24 hours a day. You can also email Chief Kilbane at [kilbanem@independenceohio.org](mailto:kilbanem@independenceohio.org).

**The Fire Department:**

**Coronavirus/COVID-19**

As we experience unprecedented changes in our daily lives from the Coronavirus. Your Independence Fire Department has been preparing for the potential challenges ahead. We are following the recommended Local, State and Federal guidelines needed so that we can continue to provide you with the service you expect.

Some of these guidelines have required us to employ additional personal protective equipment on all call. You may notice personnel wearing respirator masks, gowns and eyewear. This is for both ours and your protection.

We are also practicing social distancing much like the community has been ask to. In our case, unessential activities have been eliminated to reduce potential exposures risks to personnel.

Access to the fire station is also now limited. To ensure our services to the community, we will continue to implement recommended changes as more is learned about this virus.

In suspected Coronavirus/COVID-19 cases, please cooperate with our medics so that your care goes smoothly. We will evaluate your situation and follow recommend guidance from our medical control. What does that mean? It means in many cases you may not need to be transported. Cases of mild illness with flu like symptoms will not be transport to a medical facility. If transport is not needed you will be advised by our personnel what you will need to do.

In all cases of illness with flu like symptoms you should contact your personal care physician first prior to calling emergency services. They will advise you on your best course of action. If you have a true emergency call 911 and you will be cared for according. It is important to realize, whether you have the flu or the COVID-19 virus the treatment for mild cases is the same. That is to stay home, isolate yourself from others in the home, get rest, drink fluids and take over the counter meds as directed by your doctor for symptoms.

We realize that seniors have been asked to limit activity in public and stay home due to potential exposure. We are working with our Community Services to contact seniors in the community to see how they are doing and to have them complete a short survey. The survey will help us understand potential needs in the community during this challenging time and how we can do more to help. If you were called already but did not want to take the survey or you just want to take the survey, please call Community Services at 216-524-7373 and they will assist you.

One of the main focuses of the survey is to update our reverse911 system called SwiftReach. This system allows us to call our resident with important information. If you wish to have your home or cell phone added to this system please call Community Service or the Fire Dept. at 216-524-4001.

Thank you for your understanding and patience during this time. We are sharing important updates via our social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and SwiftReach. Feel free to call l us for any EMS/Fire concerns.

### **Mayor's Court:**

The Independence Mayor's Court has made the following changes due to the COVID-19 Coronavirus situation:

The Court Office is closed to the public to reduce the potential spread of the coronavirus, however, our phones, fax and email will be staffed daily during normal business hours. Journal Entries have been executed to continue all court hearings until April 29<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM, and officers were asked to use the April 29<sup>th</sup> hearing date for any future citations written. The Court website has been updated to reflect these changes. Should the COVID-19 Coronavirus situation

Administrative Update  
March 20, 2020

continue past April 29<sup>th</sup>, adjustments will be made accordingly.

As usual, waiverable citations can still be paid by credit card online at [court.independenceohio.org](http://court.independenceohio.org), or by money order/certified check via regular mail or by using the Court Drop Box located in the lobby of City Hall.

**Engineering Department:**

The City's Engineering Department is diligently adhering to the CDC Guidelines and has been diligent about keeping their area environmentally clean and safe. Employees are being more cautious and attentive to washing their hands. Residents and Contractors have been encouraged to handle permitting over the phone.

Construction progress meetings have been cancelled or rescheduled to be handled via teleconference or on site (outside).

We are cooperating with and following the lead of the Building Department, to keep our door closed to the main hallway, and encouraging customers to use the drop box, and/or to call into our office for assistance.

**Community Services Department:**

As you know, Governor DeWine has mandated that all Community Centers be closed until further notice from the Governor's Office.

However, a limited staff of employees will be manning the front desk to receive phone calls from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. After 5:00 pm any calls will roll over to the Recreation Department who will be receiving calls until 8:00 pm.

Our Meals on Wheels Program will continue Monday through Friday. Any senior resident who would like to register for this service, please call the Community Services Department at 216.524.7373.

It saddens us that we are not able to offer our usual programs and activities to our residents of all ages. The Civic Center is the hub of the community and where so many residents gather.

The Community Services Team will continue to work diligently on all of our current programming and plan new programs and activities for the future.

We hope to be back in business very soon!

**Recreation Department:**

The Civic Center & Fieldhouse closed at 5:00 pm Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup> per mandate from Governor Mike DeWine. We ordered additional sanitizing products (hand sanitizer, disinfectant

spray, paper towels, and antibacterial soap); many items are currently unavailable / on backorder for weeks, so additional vendors were consulted to get more items as needed. Cleaning and sanitizing items were distributed to other departments per requests, including additional soap and towel dispensers were provided to the Service Department. These dispensers were then installed by the City's Technical Services personnel. Staffing was reduced to a minimum, with many part-time staff voluntarily requesting time off. Our remaining staff that continued to work reviewed CDC guidelines, the Civic Center and additional recreation buildings were cleaned top to bottom, and special cleaning projects were started around the Civic Center. Additionally, the Recreation Department phones will remain open from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm Monday through Friday for any questions or concerns residents may have during this time. The City website and Recreation social media accounts were adjusted to reflect closures. We researched and ordered an electro-static sanitizing unit which will help with sanitizing facilities and equipment around campus. This unit should arrive by mid-April. In addition, after getting in touch with school personnel in regards to their current cleaning procedures, we borrowed a sprayer with a new sanitizing product that will be used on our outdoor playground equipment each morning. Both the activity pool and whirlpool were drained and the main pool settings were adjusted to best save and maintain chlorine during closure. Lastly, in lieu of any workout classes, an 'Indy Fit' workout session with instructor Jayme Misconish was livestreamed on the Community Center Facebook Page. We will continue to stream & videotape workout and aerobic sessions so residents are able to watch & exercise from home.

### **Service Department:**

Along with the City's Administration, the Service Department is closely monitoring the rapidly changing public health environment and following 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 employees in the field continue to wear required personal protective equipment, including gloves and protective eyewear.

Inside of our facilities, we have elevated our cleaning procedures, reinforcing cleaning of frequently touched surfaces. Installed touchless paper towel dispensers, touchless hand soap dispensers as well as touchless hand sanitizers. We have suspended the public from entering our facility to make in person requests or payments.

Our commitment is to our residents, employees and coworkers. Waste and recycling removal is essential to the health and wellness of our city. Five years ago our City's administrators decided to alter the way the Service Department provided waste service the community. At that time City purchased vehicles that are operated by one individual. In the past there were up to three employees working in close proximity to one another. The current waste collection process

utilized only one employee with limited exposure to other employees the general public as well as handling waste.

We will continue to do everything we can to keep the employees and the residents of Independence safe.

### **IT Communications:**

A revised website went live this week. Enhanced features such as interactive images, easier navigation, more fluid presentation and adaptability to mobile devices have been introduced with more coming in the near future.

With remote access coming to the forefront due to the Coronavirus/COVID-19, secure connectivity to the City computer network has been established.

A new Phone/Web Conferencing Service was implemented for the Fire Department offering enhanced collaboration abilities.

The emergency telephone connection service, known as Swiftreach, was reconfigured to provide easier access to configure and assign numbers. This will be a big help as we update our SwiftReach database going forward knowing that landlines are becoming more obsolete and those numbers will most likely be replaced with cellular devices.

New auto attendants were set up at the Civic Center and configured access was provided to the Clerk of Courts to ensure messages align with any postponements or closures.

### ***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

**The City of Independence**  
**Summer Employment**  
**Apply Online:**  
**Starting March 2nd**  
**www.independenciohio.org**

**Life Guards | Pool Concessions & Maintenance Service Department | May - September**

**Counselor Summer Camp:**  
**Mon - Fri 7 AM - 6 PM**  
Children Entering Grades 1 - 8  
**9 Weeks, June - August**  
 **High School Graduate**

**Counselor Summer Playground:**  
**Tue - Thur 9 AM - 2 PM**  
Children Entering Grades K - 4  
**6 Weeks, June - July**  
 **Must be 16+ years old**

**- See Job Details & Requirements Online -**

Administrative Update  
March 20, 2020

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](http://www.independenceohio.org).

***UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS:***

Most public meetings have been postponed or cancelled until further notice. Please refer to the City's website: [www.independenceohio.org](http://www.independenceohio.org) to check the status of your meeting.

**Have a great weekend!**