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3-23-2020 Press Conference

As cases of coronavirus – COVID-19 – continue to increase, the health, safety and welfare of the community is of the utmost importance to the City. In an effort to protect both our residents and employees, the City continues close communications with health officials, community organizations and local, state and federal government agencies to monitor updates.

Governor's Stay At Home Order

The City of Joliet is encouraging all residents to comply with the Governor's order for residents to stay at home in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The order to stay at home will remain in effect through April 7th. The order does NOT prohibit essential activities such as going to the grocery store or taking a walk. Please practice social distancing in all activities.

There have been many inquiries to the City pertaining to business and whether they may remain open following the Governor's order. To assist in determining an answer to this question, the City has posted guidance from the State on the City website, under the Coronavirus link.

City Services

The City continues to take precautionary and proactive steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is important to know plans are in place for public safety, water and sewer services to continue without interruption.

City Hall is closed to the public, but city services continue with modified procedures. Please refer to the city's website or call the City's Information Number 815-724-4000 for details on change of services.

9AM - Will County - City of Joliet Municipal Conference Call

The City coordinated a conference call this morning with Will County, New Lenox, Shorewood, Manhattan, Elwood, Plainfield, and Lockport to get an idea of what other local government agencies are doing

All are conducting business, but also having employees work from home to avoid any spread among critical staff

Several communities reported public safety employees with illnesses, but no confirmed COVID-19 cases. In cases with illnesses, employees are being told to stay home.

There was a general feeling the Governor's Executive Order pertaining to essential business was very general, and is creating some questions. Local interpretation and enforcement will be dependent upon the jurisdiction.

Community Partners/Conference Call

The City coordinated a conference call with the Will County Health Dept., Joliet Library, Will County Center for Economic Development, School District 204, Joliet YMCA, School District 86 and Amita Health – Joliet earlier today.

Will County Health Department

The Health Department shared changes in their operations with the intent to limit face to face contact as well as updates on the COVID-19 pandemic numbers for Will County. At time of call, 20 confirmed cases and 1 death.

The Health Department does not have test kits and is not testing for COVID-19. A teleconference call is scheduled today with the area hospitals for status on needs.

Business Assistance:

The top priority is the health and safety of our many residents. The measures taken by the state and local government are aimed to diminish and minimize the spread of COVID-19 however I haven't forgotten the financial impacts the outbreak is going to have on local businesses. A small business owner myself, I understand this will be a difficult time for many businesses, social institutions, and organizations. In partnership with City staff, I am working to stay focused on public health while limiting the consequences on our local economy.

I want to encourage all Joliet business owners to become familiar with the resources being allocated to assist small businesses. All Illinois businesses can now apply for disaster loans via the US Small Business Administration. Visit <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/> to apply. There has been a lot of discussion on further assistance at the federal level. Any future updates can be found at the City of Joliet Coronavirus Business Assistance webpage.

I also want to speak directly to any Joliet residents that have been laid off due to COVID-19. An employee who is temporarily laid off because their place of work closed due to the coronavirus is eligible for benefits as long as he or she is willing and able to return to work as soon as the workplace is reopened. The seven day waiting period and the requirement that the applicant register with the state employment service have been waived.

Will County Health Department:

The Will County Health Department has opened a Coronavirus – Phone: 815-740-8977. This hotline is open Monday through Friday 8am-4pm.

Kendall County Health Department:

The Kendall County Health Department has created a webpage dedicated to COVID-19: <http://www.kendallhealth.org/community-health/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/>

COVID-19 Testing for First Responders and Healthcare Professionals:

On March 13th, the White House announced a public-private partnership with several retailers to host mobile testing in parking lots to test first responders and healthcare professionals for COVID-19. The US Department of Health and Human Services selected Walmart located at 2424 W. Jefferson Street.

This screening began yesterday, Sunday March 22nd and will be open daily from 10am –4pm. The site can test a maximum of approximately 70 cars per day.

The Will County Health Department has also informed us an alternate testing site for first responder and healthcare professionals has been established in Bolingbrook at the Walgreens located at 680 East Boughton Road

These locations will NOT test the general public. This is ONLY for first responders and healthcare professionals. If you are not working in one of these critical professions and are experiencing symptoms similar to COVID-19, you are encouraged to contact your healthcare provider for guidance. If you are experiencing a medical emergency due to the symptoms, please call 9-1-1.

NEEDS

We continue collaborating with United Way of Will County and Senior Service providers to promote volunteer and donation needs as well as providing help in distributing information on services provided to the most vulnerable during this time. Please refer to our City of Joliet website for more details and/or call Information Services 815-724-4000 for direction.

Illinois Department of Public Health is encouraging all outpatient surgical and procedural centers, as well as ambulatory surgery centers and veterinarians to donate their unused personal protective equipment (PPE) that is not immediately needed to assist health care providers. To donate PPE, please contact: PPE.donations@illinois.gov.

Red Cross is experiencing a severe blood shortage due to the coronavirus outbreak. If you are healthy, feeling well and eligible to give blood or platelets, please make an appointment to donate by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting www.RedCrossBlood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767)

Joliet's Smart Message – Community Alert Network

Residents can connect to receive up to the minute **Emergency Alerts** from the City. In addition to any updates regarding COVID-19, the community alerts provide information on other areas such as, water main breaks, crime alerts, etc.

You can elect to receive Announcements, Notices, and Public Safety Non-Emergency Information sent to your home phone, work phone, texted to your cell phone, or emailed to your email account. You can register for this service on the City's website.

Visit the City's COVID-19 resources webpage (www.joliet.gov/residents/coronavirus-resources) for the latest updates.