



March 19, 2020

Information about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is evolving on an hour by hour basis as the virus is actively spreading throughout our country. All of us at the City of Sandpoint and our regional partners want our citizens and visitors to know that we are and have been working together proactively and with a reactive four phase response in mind to ensure that we continue to provide critical services to the community and address impacts of closures and quarantines on schools, businesses and events.

Phase 1: Persons Under Monitoring

Phase 2: Persons Under Investigation (Testing in Progress)

Phase 3: Confirmed Case(s) (No Person-to-Person spread or spread in household)

Phase 4: Person-to-Person Spread in the Community

As of the time of this communication, we are in Phase 2. There has not been a confirmed case in Bonner County. There was a confirmed case in neighboring Kootenai County announced today.

Leadership

City leaders, including Mayor Shelby Rognstad and City Administrator Jennifer Stapleton, are in regular contact with the community's health experts, Governor Brad Little and other state officials to understand what is happening throughout the state, region and in our community. We have been and continue to strongly advocate for swift action on relief efforts to reduce the financial burden and impact to our businesses, working families and our service industry.

Mayor Rognstad signed a 7-day emergency disaster declaration at 4:30 p.m. on March 18, 2020, in order to increase liability protection for City employees and contractors responding to the COVID-19 crisis now and into the future; free up restrictions on City purchasing processes in order to make emergency purchases to address the crisis; and make the City eligible to have eligible costs reimbursed by the federal and state governments. This declaration was ratified by the Sandpoint City Council at its meeting on March 18, 2020, which is required to extend the declaration beyond the seven days authorized by a mayoral declaration.

The City's management team meets daily to identify community and organizational needs. Dependent upon the emergent need, the team includes 6 – 15 staff members



from across all of our divisions. Our team is coordinating internal protective measures, procuring necessary equipment and facilities, and acting to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on our community.

We have developed protocols for our firefighters and police officers so they can safely respond to calls for service. Our plans also define how critical public services, like the delivery of clean drinking water and the processing of wastewater. We are also working to maintain all of other services efficiently and effectively, including processing building permits to meet housing needs and support job retention and our economy as best as we can.

Accessing City Services

Public health recommendations and guidelines have required the City to cancel all parks and recreation events and programs, facility reservations and special events through April 30th. This timeline will be continually assessed and we have not ruled out future cancellations at this point.

City Hall remains open to the public during our regular business hours Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., we have closed all of our other facilities to the public, visitors and vendors. This includes our maintenance shops, Community Hall, treatment facilities, etc.

Effective Friday, March 20th, we are implementing additional changes to protect the health of our employees and the public and ensure continuity of operations. **Our front counter in the Infrastructure & Development Services Division, which includes Building, Planning and Engineering, will be closed to the public and we will no longer offer drop-in services.** We will continue to provide all of the same services. They will just be done in a different way.

We are pleased to announce that all of our building and planning permits are processed electronically. You can submit your application, pay your fees, review the status and see our staff comments online at: <https://www.sandpointidaho.gov/your-government/permits-licenses>

Plan review and other meetings and inspections can still be scheduled with our building, planning and engineering staff by calling (208) 263-3428 or emailing



development@sandpointidaho.gov. We will also be launching an online scheduling feature in the near future.

Access to all City staff and services other than public safety (police and fire) will be at the front counter on the first floor of City Hall. We are keeping our window closed but staff are available to answer questions, process payments, etc.

We strongly encourage you to take advantage of all of the online services the City has to offer. This includes online access to utility bills and payments, parking tickets, dog licenses, business licenses and burn permits. All of these services are available on our website or can be accessed through the Engage Sandpoint mobile app. The app can be downloaded in the iTunes or GooglePlay store.

All of our City Council and commission meetings are streamed on our website. During Phases 2 – 4 of this crisis, these meetings will be conducted electronically. We will be continuing our public forum portion of the meeting, allowing public comment on agenda items and participation in public hearings but it will be electronic. We are working on enhancements to our system to make this as easy as possible for you and they will be announced in the upcoming two weeks. We will provide for both telephonic and web-based participation. You also always have the opportunity to submit written comments to the City Clerk at cityclerk@sandpointidaho.gov.

Business and Citizen Assistance

While social distancing, including current recommendations of limiting groups and gatherings to less than 10 people, will help “flatten the curve” by slowing down the spread of the disease, they create a significant hardship for some citizens and businesses.

To ease the burden on our residents and other water customers, we have suspended water shut-offs and associated fees for non-payment of City utility bills through April 30th. Avista Utilities has also announced that it is suspending power utility shut-offs during this time.

Several local businesses and organizations have stepped up to provide lunches to children out of school. A list of locations, times and other community services is now available on a new website launched by Sandpoint Online dedicated to the coronavirus. It is available at: <http://sandpointonline.com/news/coronavirus.shtml>.



The City is actively working with the Greater Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce and Bonner County Economic Development Council to monitor and compile resources that businesses might find helpful as they are forced to make hard decisions. They are available at www.bonnercountyedc.com.

The impact to our local businesses, especially our restaurants, bars and retail stores is profound. We strongly encourage anyone who is able to join us in supporting them and their employees by ordering take out from your favorite restaurants and bars. Consider purchasing gift certificates from retail stores.

Parks & Recreation

All of our City parks and their amenities, including playgrounds, courts and fields remain open at this time. Our local parks, trails and open spaces have always served as places where people can find respite and seek peace and restoration. During this time of uncertainty, these places are needed now more than ever. Our public restrooms at the Interpretive Center and Jeff Jones Town Square are open and we have increased our cleaning and disinfection practices at these facilities. All other restroom facilities will remain closed.

- Please refrain from using parks or trails if you have any symptoms associated with COVID-19
- Follow CDC's guidance on personal hygiene prior to and during use of parks or trails.
- While on trails, warn other users of your presence and as they pass, and step aside to let others pass.
- Follow CDC guidance by limiting the number of people at social gatherings to less than ten, including outdoor picnicking, pick-up sports and other group hangouts, and maintain proper physical distance at all times.
- Observe CDC's minimum recommended social distancing of 6 feet from other individuals at all times. If this is not possible, users should find an alternate location or depart that space.

There is no doubt that our guidance and access to City facilities and services may change. We are committed to continued and proactive communication in this regard. We are



pleased to announce a new dedicated webpage that will be dedicated to you with this important information. Please visit us at www.sandpointidaho.gov/COVID-19.

We have also launched a dedicated phone line where we will provide new information and you can leave messages if you have questions for us on the City response, services or other coronavirus related questions. This new number is **(208) 263-3317**.

We also have a dedicated email address at disaster@sandpointidaho.gov.

Finally, we want you to know that we are in this together. All of us at the City understand the devastation and heartbreak this awful virus is having on our community members and businesses already. We will continue to take action in the coming days, weeks and months as necessary to ensure that we as a community come out on the other side of this in the best condition possible. Sandpoint has faced adversity in the past and we are a strong, resilient and giving COMMUNITY. Let's continue to pull together and protect our most vulnerable.