

# MAYOR SALLY RUSSELL, INTRODUCTION TO RATIFYING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY DECLARATION:

These past couple of weeks have been disturbing and difficult for all of us in light of the **COVID-19, coronavirus pandemic**. At the City of Bend, we are following guidelines from State and Federal public health experts and making appropriate changes to our operations.

Earlier this week the Governor announced further means to decrease the rate of infection over the next four weeks, including restricting bars and restaurants to take-out service only, banning gatherings of more than 25 people, and urging Oregonians to avoid gatherings of more than 10 people.

These changes help protect those on the front lines: nurses and doctors, grocery store clerks and public servants of all kinds - people in our community whose jobs have gotten harder and riskier. To protect the health and safety of first responders and Oregon families, we must work together. There *is* something you can do: Social distancing will save lives.

Young and healthy people need to practice social distancing as much as the at-risk populations. Anyone could be contagious, even without showing symptoms. Isolation from our friends and neighbors will slow the rate of transmission and get Oregon to the other side of this. Please know I think of it as an amazing act of solidarity, and I thank you all for participating.

## ***HERE'S WHAT THE CITY IS DOING:***

We have [declared a local state of emergency](#) as a result of the COVID-19 and [the declaration](#) will be in effect through at least April 15.

This declaration allows more flexibility and authorization for the City Manager to take actions to help protect the health and safety of the community, through a number of means: from limiting access to public places, to buying items or services related to health and safety without normal procurement procedures that can take additional time.

To restrict the spread of COVID-19 and to protect the City's workforce so employees can continue to provide crucial City services, the City Manager has developed emergency policies regarding the use of sick leave, vacation leave, telecommuting, meeting protocols, and more.

These changes will remain in effect for the duration of the emergency.

## ***CANCELATIONS AND CLOSURES***

The City has canceled advisory committee meetings and project-specific outreach meetings or open houses. You can see here tonight that this Council meeting is limited and livestreamed. The Council meeting on April 1 is canceled.

Beginning tomorrow, Thursday, March 19, all City facilities, excluding the main Police Department lobby, will be closed to the public. Staff can still work in the buildings in order to provide service, but within social distancing guidelines.

## ***UTILITY BILLING***

Paying utility bills can be done online or over the phone.



## ***PERMIT COUNTER***

Staff from the Community Development permit counter will help customers on the phone or online.

## ***MUNICIPAL COURT***

Bend Municipal Court sessions are cancelled and the court office is closed. Court clerks are available by phone for questions about appearances or payments.

## ***COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCY***

At the moment, we are not encouraging tourism to our town. Our partners at Visit Bend pulled all paid media and canceled promotions related to tourism in Bend. With Mount Bachelor closing and our restaurants and bars closed for business, tourism will likely slow organically for the next few months.

Families in Oregon are faced with joblessness. We have 7,000 businesses in Bend that employ close to 80,000 people. Our emergency declaration helps us support businesses so that they can support their employees.

An emergency declaration allows us to justify not shutting off water for those with outstanding bills, easing regulatory processes for businesses having to adapt to these new restrictions, and creating support systems for local businesses to help with hardships due to this emergency, and more. We must respond to the immediate needs of our community to protect the economy and the people in Bend.

Also, the City is working to support area nonprofits who serve individuals and families experiencing homelessness during this critical time. We will help them be able to provide meals, case management services and hotel or rental assistance for those with the highest medical risk.

## ***WATER SERVICE***

While this emergency is in place, the City will not send shut-off notices or shut off water for non-payment of unpaid water bills. It's vitally important that our community have the ability to wash hands and keep their spaces cleaned, despite any economic hardship they may be experiencing.

## ***IN CLOSING***

This is unprecedented for our community, and for the world. It may seem like we're in the middle of this, but it's just the beginning. So let's support each other. I've seen it happening already: numerous, humbling acts of generosity we are surrounded by. That's what I want to close with.

We've seen strangers helping older people who are frightened to go into a grocery store, and individuals organizing support groups to provide care and comfort to others who need help. Ask yourself if you can help a friend or neighbor who is a health professional or first responder: bring them a meal, watch their child, walk their dog.

Thank you for caring, for taking the time to listen and help. If everyone pulls together it will make life just a little easier.



### **Accommodation Information for People with Disabilities**

To obtain this information in an alternate format such as Braille, large print, electronic formats, etc. please contact Anne Aurand at 541-388-5573 or [aurand@bendoregon.gov](mailto:aurand@bendoregon.gov).

