



Week of March 23, 2020 – Friday Memo

Good afternoon. This is the City Manager's week in review.

COVID 19 – Much like last week, a good portion of my week was spent on reviewing the COVID-19 information coming from multiple sources, participating in webinars and watching press conferences. The governor's Executive Order 2020-21 was issued on Tuesday and became effective at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday. The order effectively issued stay home and stay safe orders to all non-essential employees. City staff met immediately upon issuance of the order and discussed the definition of essential work and how our routine tasks fit the Executive Order. City staff spent the remainder of Tuesday gathering up technology and sufficient work to begin working remote starting on Wednesday morning.

This time last week there were 549 cases and 3 deaths statewide. As of today, there are 2856 cases and 60 deaths. Follow the Allegan County Health Department Facebook page for up to date information.

Closure of Public Buildings – Municipal buildings were closed to the public last week on Wednesday with the threat of the coronavirus increasing and a greater push for social distancing measures. The governor's order this week forced the closure of City Hall and DPW through April 13. The Police Department remains open and fully staffed.

Lessons Learned – The Stay Home Stay Safe order forced some immediate changes in how we operate municipal government. We've discovered several issues that needed to be addressed immediately to smooth out communication and connectivity. Specifically, we discovered only two people can remote connect to the City's server at a time. Normally, this wasn't an issue, but when more than two employees suddenly need to connect it became apparent, we needed to resolve that issue immediately. Second, we discovered that communicating by text is a normal activity, but it lacks consistency so we are looking at Microsoft Teams as a better option for communication. Finally, we also had some issues with our voicemail system that had to be worked out as well since not all staff were receiving voicemails. Overall, it was a good week to learn about how resilient our city government can be. Great job to Pam, Jenny and Nick for helping to work through the issues.

Zoom Meeting – Another top priority for the City was determining the best way to continue to hold regular City Council meetings. Our Planner has been working with elected and appointed officials to get accustomed to using the meeting platform Zoom. We focused primarily on the essentials as described in the Charter: City Council, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and Assessor Board of Appeals. Most of the membership has been through a training session at least once to get acclimated to the Zoom environment. We will be hosting an online public Zoom session in the near future to get the public used to Zoom. Thanks, Nick, for taking the lead on Zoom meetings.

Kalamazoo Lake Sewer and Water Authority – I spoke with the manager of Kal Lake this Friday afternoon and they are also closing their facility to the public and sending front desk staff home to work remote. Operations staff will still be working, but on a reduced staffing plan sufficient to maintain operations. Work requests to turn

on services will need to be scheduled a week in advance. Emergency after hour phones will still be answered, but routine communications will be via e-mails.

COVID Enforcement Guidance – I participated in a webinar Friday afternoon hosted by Michigan Municipal League to review the legal and enforcement aspects of the Governor’s Executive Order 2020-21 – Stay Home Stay Safe. The discussion focused on enforcement. For example, the City of Detroit has issued tickets to individuals congregating in public places. Violating 2020-21 can be a 90-day misdemeanor and a \$500 fine. Presenters stressed that people calling about enforcement should call the non-emergency number and not 9-11 to report offenders. While most law enforcement agencies are asking for compliance, the fines and misdemeanors are an option that can be exercised. Next, we learned more about the definition of essential business. Tobacco shops, comic book stores and golf courses are not an essential business, nor are public restrooms, but walk up ice cream shops can fit the definition of a restaurant and can remain open. Building contractors don’t fit the definition of essential unless they are making a repair to a home to protect the occupants. Marijuana retailers are permitted to operate. The presenters continued to stress the importance of social distancing in nearly every scenario that was discussed.

Republic Services – I spoke with Republic this week and they are asking residents to place all waste material inside the carts to minimize handling of material by staff. I posted that request on Facebook.

Upcoming Events – All events are cancelled.

That’s all I have for now.

Rich LaBombard
City Manager