



March 17, 2020

Dear Whitefish Employees,

This public health crisis has us all facing unprecedented challenges, and we want you to know the City is committed to the health and wellbeing of our employees.

While we have no existing cases yet, we are continually monitoring the rapidly changing situation regarding coronavirus (COVID-19) and taking guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as state and local officials. We will continue to rely on their recommendations and expertise for planning and to inform our choices.

Here is an update on our current actions:

- City Hall offices will be closed to the public from March 18 through March 27, 2020. We will continue to offer our full-range of services at City Hall by phone and email from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday - Friday. We currently provide remote payment options by phone, by mail, or online. Our payment drop box located off Baker Avenue will remain open and checked frequently throughout the day. We will also have a drop off and pick up location for building plans, applications, and other documents for various departments in the City Hall vestibule. We anticipate individuals will schedule pick-ups and drop-offs and will have contact information posted within the vestibule. Doors to the City Hall lobby will remain locked.

A letter including the emergency ordinance passed by City Council last night has been prepared for residents that addresses our actions will be sent out via our email notifications, posted on our website, and posted on all exterior doors.

Employees who are assigned to work at City Hall are expected report to work at City Hall unless otherwise notified. An extension of this closure will be considered on a week-by-week basis beginning March 27, 2020.

- All City Board, Commission and Committee meetings are canceled through April 30, 2020, except City Council Planning Board and a special meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners to be held March 17, 2020.
- In the event the Flathead City County Health Department directs or suggests a moratorium on public gatherings, or in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 within

Flathead County, City Council and Planning Board meetings are canceled through April 30, 2020.

- During City Council and Planning Board meetings, occupancy of the City Council Chambers will be limited in accordance with the recommendations of the CDC (or other federal authority) or as otherwise dictated by the Flathead City-County Health Department or state or federal law. If occupancy at a meeting is greater than that recommended or dictated, the City will accommodate individuals in other locations within City Hall and provide the opportunity for public comment in a rotating manner. The meeting will be displayed in the other locations and the opportunity for public comment will be completed in a rotating manner with proper disinfecting of the microphone and podium between each speaker. The public is encouraged to submit written comments via email to mhowke@cityofwhitefish.org or by mail to the City of Whitefish, P.O. Box 158, Whitefish, MT, 59937, rather than physically attend meetings. Any written comments received after the packet has been published, but prior to the start of the meeting will be read aloud at the meeting by City Staff.
- Public restrooms located in the parking structure and the O'Shaughnessy Center are closed through April 30, 2020.
- The City is waiving all late fees and will not turn off water service for delinquent water and sewer accounts through April 30, 2020.
- The City is waiving resort tax delinquency fees through April 30, 2020. We will work with each business on reporting needs through this challenging time.
- Implementation of Governor Bullock's directives at City offices to prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as practicing social distancing, disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces throughout the day, and providing hand sanitizer. We have also asked all employees to stay home if they are feeling sick.
- We have confirmed that the normal treatment of our water and wastewater effectively kills the Coronavirus and have taken measures to ensure continued supply to our customers.
- Our first responders are outfitted and prepared to continue providing 24/7 coverage for your emergency needs. We thank them for their service.
- Effective March 16, 2020, all employee travel for business purposes is cancelled through April 17th and may be extended. We are also monitoring all personal travel, including those expected to return soon. Flights are considered high risk due to the confined area of larger gatherings of individuals. Please consider rescheduling personal travel to a later time or reaching out to your supervisor to determine if a 14-day self-quarantine is likely required before returning to work.

- All school related programs such as after school and before school will follow the closures of the School District. We will process refunds due to the extenuating circumstances of this public health issue.
- Our telecommuting policy has been updated and provides a process for requests to work remotely. For those positions that are conducive to working remotely, we are allowing arrangements when childcare is an issue due to school closures. Our Information Technology Office is working diligently to ensure all remote work is done in a safe manner and does not put our City's network and data at risk.
- No meter change-outs or fixture counts that require staff to enter homes will be completed through April 17th. This primarily impacts remodels and may be extended.
- All Departments have plans to continue essential operations through potential staffing shortages or necessary closures. Please work with your supervisors to coordinate potential remote working opportunities.
- City staff should limit meetings to smaller groups and utilize our larger conference rooms or use other means for remote meetings.
- All City staff that must visit construction sites or work in the public must practice proper social distancing by staying 6 feet from others. Please contact those who you are schedule to visit to ensure no one on site is ill or has been ill within the past 14-days.
- The City Council truly cares about City staff and has officially approved up to two weeks of paid emergency leave for all employees if they are required to be quarantined by the Flathead City-County Health Department for COVID-19 . An administrative policy regarding the paid emergency leave will be issued later today.
- All other City policies remain in effect at this time.

It is essential we think beyond ourselves and especially consider the most vulnerable in City team and community. We ask you to stay vigilant with these best practices:

- Practice "social distancing" by staying 6 feet from others and canceling gatherings of 10 people or more (no gatherings for immunocompromised people and/or 60+ years).
- Wash your hands thoroughly and often with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your cough/sneeze with a tissue (or your elbow).
- Stay away from work, school, or other people if you become sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

- If you become sick, call ahead to your health care provider, health department, urgent care, or emergency room before arrival.
- If you require emergency services, please tell the dispatcher in advance if you have flu-like symptoms so EMS can be prepared with appropriate safety equipment.

If you have any questions, please contact your supervisors. I will be debriefing with Department Directors daily to provide any updated information to you in a timely fashion.

While these times are trying, we will get through them together. Thanks for staying vigilant and for your continued service to our community.

Sincerely,

Dana Smith
City Manager

ORDINANCE NO. 20-04

An Emergency Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Whitefish, Montana, enacting measures to reduce the spread of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and waiving a second reading.

WHEREAS, coronaviruses are a large family of virus that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more serious diseases and are easily spread by person-to-person contact;

WHEREAS, in late 2019 an outbreak of a new strain of coronavirus began in Wuhan, China; and

WHEREAS, on February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization named the new strain of coronavirus causing illness in China COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, cases of COVID-19 have been identified in a growing number of locations internationally, including the United States; and

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic due to the spread of COVID -19 but emphasized that containment is still possible; and

WHEREAS, on March 12, 2020, Governor Steve Bullock declared a state of emergency related to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, President Donald Trump declared a national emergency related to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 15, 2020, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) issued interim guidance recommending the cancellation of events or gatherings that consist of 50 or more people for the next eight weeks to reduce the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 15, 2020, Governor Steve Bullock directed the closure of public schools for two weeks to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and strongly recommended the public limit all gatherings, especially those in excess of 50 people, in every community across the state; and

WHEREAS, as of March 15, 2020, there have been seven reported cases of COVID-19 in Montana, although none in Flathead County; and

WHEREAS, § 7-5-104, MCA, authorizes the City Council to waive the second reading of an ordinance passed in response to an emergency and provides such ordinance is effective upon passage; and

WHEREAS, an emergency ordinance requires a two-thirds vote of the whole City Council for passage and remains effective for no more than 90 days; and

WHEREAS, §§ 2-3-103 through 2-3-111, MCA, provide that public agencies must ensure that prior to a final agency decision is taken that is of significant interest to the public, adequate

notice is given and the public is allowed a reasonable opportunity to participate; and

WHEREAS, § 2-3-112, MCA, provides §§ 2-3-103 through 2-3-111, MCA, do not apply to an agency decision that must be made to address an emergency situation affecting the public health, welfare, or safety; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 constitutes an emergency situation affecting the public health, safety and general welfare and proactively implementing mitigation measures to slow the spread of COVID-19 is in the best interests of the City and its inhabitants.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Whitefish, Montana, as follows:

Section 1: All of the recitals set forth above are hereby adopted as Findings of Fact.

Section 2: All City Board, Commission and Committee meetings are canceled through April 30, 2020, except City Council, Planning Board and a special meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners to be held March 17, 2020. The City Manager is authorized to extend cancellation of meetings on a week-by-week basis beginning April 30, 2020.

Section 3: In the event the Flathead City-County Health Department directs or suggests a moratorium on public gatherings, or in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 within Flathead County, City Council and Planning Board meetings are canceled through April 30, 2020. The City Manager is authorized to cancel City Council and Planning Board meetings on a week-by-week basis beginning April 30, 2020.

Section 4: During City Council and Planning Board meetings, occupancy of the City Council Chambers will be limited in accordance with the recommendations of the CDC (or other federal authority) or as otherwise dictated by the Flathead City-County Health Department or state or federal law. If occupancy at meeting is greater than that recommended or dictated, the City will accommodate individuals in other locations within City Hall and provide the opportunity for public comment in a rotating manner. The public is encouraged to submit written comments rather than physically attend meetings. Any written comments received after the packet has been published but prior to the start of the meeting will be read aloud at the meeting by City Staff. The City Manager is authorized to implement any recommended or dictated occupancy requirements.

Section 5: City Hall offices are closed to the public from March 18 through March 27, 2020. The City Manager is authorized to extend the closure on a week-by-week basis beginning March 27, 2020. Essential services at City Hall will continue to be provided to customers remotely.

Section 6: The City temporarily waives all late fees and will not shut off service for delinquent water and sewer accounts through April 30, 2020. The City temporarily waives resort tax delinquency fees through April 30, 2020. The City Manager is authorized to extend such waivers on a week-by-week basis beginning April 30, 2020.

Section 7: The City approves emergency leave up to an equivalent of two weeks paid leave for all City employees who are required to be quarantined by the Flathead City-County

Health Department or a licensed physician due to COVID-19. Employees who are normally scheduled for shifts of 40 hours per week will be eligible to receive 80 hours of paid emergency leave. Employees who are normally scheduled for less or more than 40 hours per week will receive a prorated amount. Emergency leave does not accrue nor is it payable upon termination. In the event H.R. 6201, Families First Coronavirus Response Act, is adopted by the federal government and requires the City to provide more extensive benefits, the City will do so.

Section 8: The public restrooms located in the parking structure and the O’Shaughnessy Center are closed through April 30, 2020. The City Manager is authorized to extend the closures beginning April 30, 2020.

Section 9: If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase or word of this Emergency Ordinance is for any reason held to be invalid or unconstitutional by a court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall affect only that part held invalid, and the remaining provisions thereof shall continue in force and effect.

Section 10: This Emergency Ordinance shall take effect immediately upon its adoption by the City council of the City of Whitefish, Montana, and signing by the Mayor thereof.

PASSED AND ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WHITEFISH, MONTANA, THIS 16TH DAY OF MARCH, 2020.

John M. Muhlfeld, Mayor

ATTEST:

Michelle Howke, City Clerk