



March 17, 2020

Dear Whitefish Residents,

This public health crisis has us all facing unprecedented challenges, and we want you to know the City of Whitefish is committed to the health and wellbeing of our residents and visitors. We are empathetic to the sacrifices, the anxiety, the struggle of changing habits, and the economic impacts we are all enduring.

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 of 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. Doors to the City Hall lobby will remain locked. An extension of this closure will be considered on a week-by-week basis beginning March 27, 2020.

Important contact information:

General inquiries or to make payment:	406-863-2400
Planning & Building Department:	406-863-2410
Public Works Department:	406-863-2460
Utility Billing Department:	406-863-2456
Parks & Recreation Department:	406-863-2470

- 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 in accordance with social distancing guidelines. 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 temporarily 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 canceled through April 17th. This may be extended.
- All school-related programs such as after school and before school will follow the closures of the Whitefish School District. We will process refunds due to the extenuating circumstances of this public health issue.

- 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.

It is essential we think beyond ourselves and especially consider the most vulnerable in our 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.

We will provide updates as needed on our website and through our email notification system. If you would like to sign up for email notifications, you can do so at <http://www.cityofwhitefish.org/city-hall/email-notifications.php> or by visiting our website and clicking the link in the lower right-hand corner.

While these times are trying, we will get through them together. We ask you to show extra kindness and compassion and take good care. Thanks for staying vigilant.

Sincerely,

Dana Smith
City Manager