
THE CITY of *Altoona*

City of Altoona
1303 Lynn Avenue
Altoona, WI 54720

March 19, 2020

Dear Altoona Citizens,

Today, to do our part in limiting the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the City is closing City Hall and the library to visitors. Most City services will continue, but we are making adjustments on how those services will be provided. Please continue to check the City (www.ci.altoona.wi.us) and library (<https://altoonapubliclibrary.org/>) websites for updates. The City's customer service department will remain available by phone at 715-839-6092 or by email at cityhall@ci.altoona.wi.us and our employees will be able to answer any questions you may have. Please also consider following the City's various social media platforms - Facebook (@altoonawi), Twitter (@altoonawi) , Instagram (@cityofaltoonawi) or on Nextdoor.

Many City processes may be initiated online. Forms and applications can be found by visiting the City's website as noted above and double-clicking on the "Residents" tab. The forms and applications will be visible on the left side of the page. You may mail forms and applications to City Hall, 1303 Lynn Avenue, Altoona, WI 54720, or deposit them, along with any applicable fees, in the drop box for utility payments located on the outside of the City Hall near the front door.

As mandated by the State of Wisconsin, the community room will continue to remain open to accommodate early voting. However, we are encouraging registered voters to opt for mail-in voting by following these instructions.

If you are a registered Wisconsin voter, you may visit myvote.wi.gov and click on the "Vote Absentee" button on the left side of the page to request a ballot be mailed to you. You will be asked to provide a copy of your photo identification along with your request if identification is not already on file with the City. More information about photo ID can be found at www.bringit.wi.gov.

Any questions related to requesting an absentee ballot can be directed to City Clerk, Cindy Bauer, at 715-839-6092. Your request must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on the Thursday before the election in order for an absentee ballot to be SENT to you.

Yesterday, I provided a briefing to City Council at a special meeting wherein the Council affirmed Mayor Pratt's March 17th proclamation of emergency in the City of Altoona related to the COVID-19 outbreak. An updated briefing is attached, which includes an explanation of the intent of the emergency proclamation.

We appreciate everything you all are doing to keep each other safe and healthy. Please practice the hygiene and social distancing guidelines as suggested by the CDC and County Health Department. The quickest way through this crisis will be to all work together and do our respective parts. We apologize for any inconvenience changes in operations may cause—please contact me if you have an ideas regarding how we can do something better. I may be reached Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at 715-839-6092. You can also email me at michaelg@ci.altoona.wi.us. I check my email frequently, even on weekends.

Sincerely,

CITY OF ALTOONA

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized, with a prominent "M" and "k".

Mike Golat, City Administrator

City of Altoona COVID-19 Response Update

Provided below for your consideration and review is an update related to City operations in response to the continued spread of COVID-19, with the first confirmed case of COVID-19 reported in Eau Claire County this morning, March 19, 2020. The report reflects actions taken to date to minimize service interruption to our residents, while being mindful of the impacts of COVID-19 on our residents and employees. If there are any notable changes to operations in the future, we will notify you.

Continuation of Essential Services

The City's number one priority during the COVID-19 crisis is continuation of essential services, namely police, fire, EMS and public works. As you know these services are the most critical for assuring general public health, safety and welfare. Therefore, our main priority with respect to these services is keeping our employees healthy so they can continue to work, especially as we prepare for a certain surge in COVID-19 cases in the coming days and weeks.

In order to keep our workers safe, we have implemented several policies to minimize contact amongst our workers and with the public. The public safety building is closed to the general public. Protocols have been established for EMS and police response to minimize contact with the public under specific circumstances, and shifts and breaks are being staggered. We will continue to make adjustments to operations as circumstances dictate.

EMS and police are facing a shortage of personal protective equipment, as is the entire regional medical community; therefore, we are being judicious in our use of that equipment and are exploring options for acquiring more of the equipment that we need.

Continuation of Critical Administrative Services

There are also other important functions of our municipal services that must continue without undue delay. These include both external and internal services such as permit processing, development review, inspections, issuance of licenses, payroll, accounts payable and accounts receivable. Administrative staff members have been directed to work from home as much as possible to minimize contact and possible exposure. Our first remote work stations, including phones and computers, have been set up and are working well. Employees are coming to the office as necessary to assure critical processes continue without unacceptable delay. Visits to City Hall from the general public have been prohibited, but we are still able to handle customer service inquiries via phone and email.

Canceling Events and Programming

The City has canceled all City-related events for a minimum of the next eight weeks. We will be looking to the Health Department and Governor for further guidance on this issue. This includes all events at River Prairie Center, recreation and library programming and sports at our facilities. The library is closed to the public, but is exploring opportunities for continuing to provide services while maintaining the health of our library employees and the general public.

Elections

As of today, the State has confirmed that elections will move forward as scheduled. We are obligated to keep our doors open to the community room at City Hall for those that want to cast an absentee ballot, but we are encouraging mail-in ballots.

Continuation of Effective and Efficient Governance and Operations

In order to provide flexibility and the ability to respond appropriately to issues that may arise Mayor Pratt signed an emergency proclamation related to the COVID-19 crisis on March 17, 2020; the proclamation was reviewed and ratified by Council on March 18, 2020 at a special City Council meeting. The proclamation provides authority to the City Administrator to do what is in the City's best interest to address COVID-19 operational issues as they arise. The City Administrator understands there is much responsibility that comes with this authority, and is committed to checking in appropriately with the Mayor and Council members on any critical issues that arise.

Staff is also working on a plan to make sure Council and Board meetings can be held as necessary to complete City business. To that end, staff is exploring options for virtual meetings and is working with neighboring jurisdictions on, perhaps, implementing a solution we can all use. The most difficult part of setting up the virtual meetings will be determining how we can maintain open public participation at those meetings.

Public Engagement

Our public information team is working diligently to keep the public up to date with the most recent news related to COVID-19. Updates provided by the County Health Department are being posted on our social media sites. In addition, we will provide updates on changes to City operations as they occur. We will also remind our citizens to take care of themselves and their neighbors by following the Health Department guidelines to suppress the COVID-19 surge so as not to overwhelm our health system. We will also remind our residents of all the healthy and fun outdoor activities they can take advantage of in our community and resources that are available to help out during this difficult time.

Coordination with our Neighbors

There has been a very coordinated effort, led by the Eau Claire City/County Health Department, to assure governmental institutions including federal, state and local jurisdictions, the health care community and schools are all working together to address the challenges of COVID-19 and to assure consistent messaging. Every day at 3:30 there is a press briefing led by the Health Department that is available for viewing on the Eau Claire City-County Health Department Facebook page through Facebook live. On March 18th, staff participated in a coordination meeting and press briefing that included Representative Ron Kind as well as representatives from State, County and local government as well as most of the regional health care providers and schools.

We are working together to come up with solutions to issues that we are all facing with the recognition that we will be most effective addressing this crisis on a regional level by taking advantage of all of our resources and organizational strengths.

End.