

## COVID STATE OF EMERGENCY PRESS CONFERENCE

Good Afternoon Everyone. Thank you for joining us. We are seeing COVID-19 continue to spread in our neighboring states and we now have 9 confirmed cases in southern Idaho. Fortunately, there are currently no reported cases in Bonner County. In an effort to do everything within our power to flatten the curve, or slow the spread of this pandemic, it is incumbent upon all of us to do what we can to protect our community. For this reason, I am declaring a State of Emergency for the City of Sandpoint. The goal of which is to protect the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions, who are most vulnerable to the coronavirus. By practicing good hygiene, staying home while sick and limiting our social contact we reduce the strain on our limited health care resources and we save lives.

I encourage everyone to visit the CDC website to learn more about the coronavirus and how you can protect yourself and your loved ones. The CDC has clear guidelines for 15 days to slow the spread. Make a plan to address sanitation and safety in your home and in your workplace. Gatherings should be limited to no more than 10 people. Everyone should practice social distancing of 6' or more in the workplace and in public. For Restaurants and Bars, I strongly encourage you to limit your operations to curbside take-out only. In-house seating is not recommended for the health and safety of everyone. Take-out service of sealed alcoholic beverages will be allowed for licensed businesses in an effort to support local business to the greatest extent possible.

City Council and Planning and Zoning meetings will be limited to necessary staff and public who are presenting to council only. All of our meetings are streamed live on our website ([www.sandpointidaho.gov](http://www.sandpointidaho.gov)) and we have opened up a conference line that will let you call in and share your thoughts/comments during the open public forum and on agenda items. The number to call is 208 946-2092. The host extension number is 1738#. City Hall will remain open and continue to provide the necessary services expected by our residents. That said, all non-critical staff will work remotely and conferences will happen electronically to reduce the risk of spread.

I am confident that our community will remain resilient in the face of this challenge. We are fortunate to have the benefit of learning from other cities that have developed processes to mitigate community spread. In taking these precautionary steps, we are well ahead of the curve and are well poised to minimize the impact of COVID-19 in our community. The reason we are taking these measures, is to save lives.

Now is the time for all of us to check in with friends and loved ones, reach out to neighbors, and practice kindness by offering a helping hand at any opportunity. The closure of schools will necessitate many parents staying home with their children. There will also be a significant impact on local businesses who will see less economic activity and may need to reduce workforce for a period of time.

The Federal Government is working on a trillion dollar federal relief package to aid everyone impacted by this emergency. Congress is currently considering a \$2000 direct deposit into the bank accounts of every American within a few weeks. Similarly, Idaho has released a \$4.5 million dollar relief package to help fund the fight against coronavirus throughout the state.

The City of Sandpoint already provides qualifying seniors with a discount on utility service through the SCRUB program and as of today, the City will put a freeze on all water shutoffs through April 30<sup>th</sup> to give all residents reprieve on utility payments.

I'm incredibly proud of businesses and individuals who have stepped up to serve our city and county residents. Arlo's Restaurant has offered free lunches to kids until school reopens. The Pack River Store has also offered free lunches to kids on Fridays. I've reached out to numerous other businesses and non-profits to identify ways that we can work together to meet the needs of residents during this time.

Sandpoint is a community known for its strength and tenacity. We are a resilient people who know how to take care of each other through difficult times. Our City and the Regional Task Force will continue to work together to address COVID-19 and share resources to meet the needs of our most vulnerable. We are in this together, and we will get through this together.