

ALBANY CALIFORNIA



CITY OF ALBANY
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MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2020

MAYOR'S STATEMENT

Just two weeks ago, I gave some information to an almost-full room at the last Council meeting about the then-growing incidences of COVID-19 spread in the area. Already at that time, the situation was changing day to day, but now, circumstances have accelerated even more. In our Special Meeting just now, the City has declared a state of emergency.

I feel for all those affected by the Novel Coronavirus, COVID-19 global pandemic. These are extraordinary times, and call for measures that most of us have probably not seen in our lifetimes.

Guidelines have been changing rapidly. Just today, the federal government is limiting gatherings of more than 10 people. Yesterday, the state government ordered that alcohol establishments close, restaurants curtail their business, and seniors shelter in place. Today, six Bay Area Counties issued a shelter-in-place order starting at midnight tonight for everyone. Non-essential activities and functions are being shut down. The City facilities will be mostly closed to the public, but city staff will be available by email and phone.

This is not a complete lockdown. Venturing outside of your home for essentials, such as food, is allowed. There is an allowance for being outdoors for exercise, as long as you observe social distances of 6 feet or more. People are simply being asked to limit contact as much as possible, in order to stem the spread of the Coronavirus.

I know many will want details, and have many questions. We will try to answer some questions tonight, but will make sure that any and all information is available online on our website, and provide you with email addresses and phone numbers to contact for more information.

Work on the science of the Coronavirus is ongoing, and we learn more every day. However, there is consensus that social distancing will absolutely affect the outcome in a positive way. Authorities agree that the virus is here. Social distancing will allow us the ability to greatly reduce the impact to the public, slow the spread, and allow us to have the capacity to be able to treat the cases of COVID-19. I implore you to heed all guidance from health care officials, and take seriously their instructions and requests. Together, we can shorten the lifespan of this pandemic and get back to business as usual as quickly as possible.

I have heard from small businesses in the City who are fearful and/or already struggling. My heart goes out to them. The city has prepared a page on their website dedicated to resources for those small businesses. The County has a Small Business Administration which can help, and that resource, and others, are listed on the website.

I've also heard from those who have at least temporarily lost their jobs due to the virus. I will be asking city staff what power we have to temporarily stop rent increases and the like. Other government entities, such as the state, may be issuing similar orders in the days to come. I have asked the County to halt all evictions. No one should suffer even more during these extraordinary times.

Lives are up-ended as many of us are asked to work from home, and children must stay home from school and be cared for by parents. Many of these parents may not be able to work from home. I ask that you consider your neighbors and local businesses during this time and do what you can to help, while staying within the public health guidelines.

It is my priority to make sure that seniors, and other vulnerable groups, continue to receive services during this time, and I believe the City Manager will be saying more about this a little later on in her City Manager Report.

Please stay safe and well.