

Letter from the City Manager – March 18, 2020

Dear Maryville Employees,

Many of you remember the impact to our organization during the economic crisis in 2008. As unpleasant as that was for all of us, we did what we had to do, and we survived it and came out of it stronger than ever. Once again, we find ourselves facing a hurdle that we must rise up and deal with collectively. As you know, COVID-19 or coronavirus, has spread across our globe and disrupted the world's daily routines. This pandemic is having serious health and economic impacts in every community worldwide. While no cases have yet been confirmed in Blount County, we are feeling the effects in dramatic ways. Each one of us is now called upon to navigate this pandemic and provide the services that our citizens and customers depend on and by doing so bring some stability in an unstable world.

The overall strategy for dealing with this virus is to flatten out the speed of cases. Communities who have not had time to slow the spread of this virus have seen their medical facilities overrun and have been unable to treat all patients. If we all do our part, we can slow the spread so our hospitals, clinics and doctors can provide everyone who is sick the treatment they need. The more dramatic our response the better our results will be in slowing the spread of the virus.

Therefore, I am asking each of you to educate yourself on this issue and embrace our collective efforts to minimize the coronavirus impact. First and foremost, your health is important to us and we are going to do everything in our power to keep each of you safe. With that in mind, the Managing Directors have been working tirelessly to consider possible situations that we may face and build appropriate contingency plans. We are phasing our plans to ratchet up as the situation intensifies. There is no way we can know every possible scenario or every single thing that will confront us; so bear with us as we make some plans as we go and things change quickly.

First things first. Our primary goals in all the actions we take is to mitigate and minimize the spread of viral infection in our community to keep our citizens and our staff well and continue to provide the essential services our citizens rely on without disruption.

We are all individually responsible for taking precautions and actions that mitigate the spread of virus. We ask that you remain vigilant, remind each other, and keep these habits at the front of your mind. Additionally, please encourage your family and friends to follow these protocols.

CDC recommendations include:

- Use PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) as required by your job (refresh teams on this protocol if needed.)

- Follow recommended CDC personal hygiene guidelines – including:
 - Wash your hands, especially after touching any frequently used item or surface. Request gloves if you process paperwork.
 - Avoid touching your face.
 - Remain six feet from other people. Do not shake hands, bump fists, or any other physical contact.
 - Sneeze or cough into a tissue, or the inside of your elbow.
 - Check with your managing director for your department’s plan for cleanliness of your areas.
 - Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible.
 - Regularly sanitize commonly touched areas (door handles, desk tops, elevator buttons, phones, handrails – and your vehicle both personal and city fleet)
 - Avoid water fountains.
 - Wherever possible, cover this information with teams each morning before the workday begins.

We will continue to provide the most current best practices on a regular basis for employees and their families.

Personnel Policy Clarifications and Exceptions

We have added the following clarifications and exceptions to our Personnel Policy for sick leave during the outbreak. These are subject to change based on state, federal or situational demands. If you have any questions, please contact Leslie Crawford, HR Manager, 273-3426.

- For all City work locations, a 14-day CDC recommended quarantine will apply if:
 - Employee tests positive for COVID-19
 - Employee is exposed to someone with COVID-19
 - Employee has traveled out of the country
- If an employee is sick, go home. Regular sick leave procedures would apply.
- If an employee is COVID-19 symptomatic as determined by CDC screening questionnaire, employee will be required to consult with physician for testing determination.
- If an employee is in a high-risk group, employee should contact HR to determine appropriate plan of action. These will be handled on a case-by-case basis.
- If an employee is a primary caregiver to high-risk group and has concerns about exposure, contact HR.

- Employees who may experience hardship due to long-term school cancellations should contact their managing directors. These situations will be handled on a case-by-case basis according to the department's business continuity requirements and in consult with the City Manager's Office.

Exceptions to Sick Leave Policy

- Doctors notes for regular sick leave will not be required until further notice.
- Employees who test positive for or are in quarantine due to exposure of COVID-19 may accrue a sick leave deficit that will be reimbursed through future leave or repayment if you leave your job.

Additional Medical Coverage Information

- COVID-19 testing will be covered at 100% through MetaClinic – and as usual, no copay will be charged. Testing through primary care physician (PCP) will be covered at 100% but the \$15 copay may still apply.
- MetaClinic currently has COVID-19 tests in their inventory.

Response Plan – A Phased Approach

I want to share with you the City's approach to the actions we are taking to prepare for the coming weeks and evolving situation. Individual departments have implemented certain protocols and are developing additional response plans. The Managing Directors will be sharing those in the coming days. We are taking a three-phase approach with the first phase already in progress. Additional actions are being added to this plan today. As always, these plans will evolve as the situation progresses and we will keep you posted regularly with updates.

Phase I (Mitigation) Includes:

Employee-Based Actions

- Employees in a "high-risk" category as defined by the CDC should contact HR to make this known and for assistance with accommodations
- In order to prevent unintentional spread, we will close the Employee Gym effective Friday, March 20 until further notice.
- Employees should check with Managing Director regarding department's cleaning plan and how to get sanitization supplies. As you know, supplies are difficult to come by, and it will be important that these resources are managed wisely throughout the organization for the duration of need.
- Departments should ensure backup for payroll personnel and identify other critical positions for future implementations.
- Cancel or postpone all unnecessary travel and training.

City Council-Based Actions

- Introduce only new projects, council items, board or commission items that are mission critical. Focus on current/ in progress items and service delivery.

General Public

- Municipal Court (City Court) is closed until April 14, 2020.
- Cancel or postpone all unnecessary meetings, school tours, and training.
- Minimize any visitor traffic past the lobby areas of the Municipal Center and Operations Center.
- Continue messaging for public payment methods as an alternative to in-person transactions.

We will continue to develop our Phase I approach until we are required to move to Phase II. These will be progressive actions if there is a confirmed case in our community. Phase III will focus on actions required if there is a confirmed case in our organization.

In addition to regular updates via email and posted notices, we have established this [site for employee-specific updates](#). This will be updated in the coming days with additional information.

Another good source for information is our [Intergovernmental webpage](#) with links to resources updated regularly.

I know that all of this seems very uncertain, but I assure you that we will all stand side-by-side as we provide the stability our community needs in this situation. We encourage you to share with your family and friends what we are learning about how to keep our community as safe as possible. We encourage you to ask questions that are on your mind. We don't have all the answers, but we will find them together. Times like these are what being a true public servant is all about, and I have never been as proud as I am today to be part of a team that will help lead this community through this uncertain hour.

Sincerely,
Greg McClain

Community Updates

March 18, 2020

- The Tennessee Department of Health reported on March 18 that there are 73 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Tennessee. So far, no confirmed cases in Blount County. One physically in Knoxville, one in Sevierville.
- Blount Memorial's drive-through testing has begun at East Tennessee Medical Group today.
- Maryville City Schools extended its closure until April 6.
- The [Blount County Public Library](#) and [Maryville-Alcoa Blount County Parks and Recreation](#) have suspended some services. Check their websites for more information.