

## A Message from Mayor Preiner

On Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, Governor Walz issued an Executive Order declaring a peacetime state of emergency in response to the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Minnesota. On March 16<sup>th</sup>, President Trump issued updated guidelines and Governor Walz issued a second executive order related to closing the schools. This is a very fluid situation with new realities emerging every day. The purpose of this message is to update you on steps Columbus is taking to minimize COVID-19 exposure risks to our citizens, staff and visitors.

1. The City Hall will be open for business as usual. A Plexiglas shield has been installed in the window at City Hall to provide a physical barrier in order to minimize droplet transmission risk of the virus between staff and visitors. An opening at the bottom of the shield will allow papers to be passed through for those submitting applications or other forms to city staff. Staff will make copies of forms passed through the window and return originals to the owner. This will allow discussion of questions through the Plexiglas without risking potential virus transmission between staff and visitor via the paperwork. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer and single use pens/pencils will be available at the window.
2. Events and meetings that are not essential to conducting City Business will be postponed to a future date, including the April 9<sup>th</sup> Columbiz Event.
3. Based on new Federal Guidelines issued March 16<sup>th</sup>, recommending that we avoid gatherings involving groups of more than 10 people for the next 15 days, a Declaration of Local Emergency was issued by Mayor Preiner today, March 17, that will allow Columbus to augment rules and procedures related to how we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic situation and protect citizens and property. It will also affect City Council, Planning Commission and other Board and Committee as follows:

Planning Commission Meetings: Beginning with the April 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, Planning Commission meetings that do not require a Public Hearing will be held via teleconference. Planning Commission meetings that require a Public Hearing will be postponed until guidelines allow for larger gatherings of people. **The public will be able to dial into the teleconference but will not be allowed access to the Chambers for their own safety.** The phone number to access the teleconference will be posted on the City Website and meeting packet material will be available to the public via the City of Columbus Website. Since the meeting will be held via teleconference rather than in-person, it will not be filmed and video will not be available on LATV or the City website. However, in addition to inviting the public to dial into the teleconference in real time, an audio file of the teleconference will be made available to the public on the City Website.

City Council Meetings: Beginning with the March 25<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting, City Council meetings will be conducted via teleconference. **The public will be able to dial into the teleconference but will not be allowed access to the Chambers for their own safety.**

The phone number to access the teleconference will be posted on the City Website and meeting packet material will be available to the public via the City of Columbus Website. Since the meeting will be held via teleconference rather than in-person, it will not be filmed and video will not be available on LATV or the City website. However, in addition to inviting the public to dial into the teleconference in real time, an audio file of the teleconference will be made available to the public on the City Website.

Other Board and Committee Meetings: The April 8<sup>th</sup> Economic Development Authority Meeting are outside of the 15 day new Federal guidelines window, so will remain as scheduled and we will reassess whether or not to hold those meetings via teleconference based on more current recommended guidelines.

Meetings with developers, businesses, citizens, staff or visitors that are time sensitive and involve more than a few minutes of conversation at the City Hall window, will be held in the Chambers where social distancing can be maintained. As such, it may be necessary to schedule these meetings in advance if the Chambers are in use when you stop by.

4. Additional disinfecting of surfaces, focusing on contact points such as doors, countertops, and chairs, will be performed frequently. Posters reminding everyone to remember basic prevention methods (e.g., wash hands) have been posted.
5. As things evolve, we will be reassessing our mitigation strategies and adjusting them accordingly, keeping you apprised as we do.

**You can do your part to help minimize potential transmission of the COVID-19 virus by:**

- Reserving visits to City Hall only for business that cannot be accomplished via telephone, fax and/or email.
- Staying home if you have cold or flu-like symptoms and avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Covering your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throwing the tissue in the trash. If you don't have a tissue available, use your elbow to cover your cough/sneeze.
- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoiding touching your face especially your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

- Maintaining 6 feet of distance between yourself and others if your conversation will be more than a few minutes in duration. Avoiding handshakes or other forms of contact (think instead, fist bumps, elbow bumps, waves, etc.)

To learn about updates on the Coronavirus, how you can protect yourself and others, and more, please visit the website for [Minnesota Department of Health - Coronavirus](#) , [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#) or Anoka County's page [2019 Novel Coronavirus Situation Summary](#). The Minnesota Department of Health hotline for the public is: 651-201-3920.

Stay safe and stay healthy Columbus!