



COVID-19 Update

*Mayor Reichert Press Conference * March 19, 2020*

- Good afternoon...
- We have learned very recently that two new case of “Corona Virus”, N/K/A COVID-19 have now been identified in Middle Georgia, one is a resident in Macon-Bibb County and one is a resident of Peach County. Both are under the care of Navicent Health. I am advised that both are “stable”.
- So, the when the “Enemy is at the Gates”, it’s not a time to panic... rather it’s a time to review our strategy... modify and update it, as necessary, ... and work together to get through this challenge, and
- WE WILL GET THROUGH THIS !!! Remember, for most of us, this will be an inconvenience; for those who actually get the virus, it will be a minor illness, similar to the flu for most, but for some (who are either elderly and medically fragile or very young and weak) it could be a serious or even fatal disease. SO THAT HAS BEEN OUR FOCUS TO AVOID SPREADING THE VIRUS TO OUR MOST SUSEPTIBLE CITIZENS.
- As we watched the spread of this virus through the state last week, health and emergency officials at the local and state level began stressing even more the need for people to take efforts that would slow that spread.

- So, we must not see today's confirmed case as a time to raise the level of concern or worry, just confirmation of what we already knew was going to happen and to continue our efforts.

- We have emphasized Individual Awareness and Responsibility, and today we renew those common sense precautions
Keep doing what you have been doing so well to this point, which is taking proactive steps identified by doctors and health officials:
 - Continue with social distancing and avoiding large crowds;
 - Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently with soap and water for at least 30 seconds each time;
 - Cover your mouth when you cough and sneeze, and then wash your hands;
 - Keep your hands away from our mouth, nose, and eye;
 - Don't greet people by shaking hands;
 - Recognize the symptoms of Covid-19: Fever/cough/shortness of breath
 - Stay home if you are sick or have symptoms; and
 - Talk with your primary doctor or healthcare provider if you have concerns or feel ill.

- We appreciate the efforts of community organizations, educational systems and institutions, and governmental partners who have taken bold steps to slow the spread of the virus. Governments, schools, large events, and businesses have reviewed their operations and begun partial closures or alternate service delivery models down or otherwise modifying services to limit the spread.

- And they are doing this while maintaining a level of the service that our public relies on every day.

- Thank you to everyone for making very difficult decisions – and for making alternate plans to support our community – to help slow the spread. And we're not done. Each day

teams across the community are identifying other ways in which we can slow the spread and support each other.

- So far in our community:
 - We have closed our Recreation Centers, and the Centreplex has canceled highly anticipated concerts and events.
 - The Courts have rescheduled trials and arraignments, and have limited public access to offices, instead asking people to utilize online services and information.
 - Schools have suspended classes, and now parents are figuring out how to work from home, while teaching and caring for their children. The school district, in a short time, built an entire e-learning system that would help parents teach and allow teachers to provide ongoing support.
 - Our library system has closed indefinitely, but they have tried to move some level of service online to help support children and parents while they're home.
 - We will be missing out on this year's Cherry Blossom Festival, a sad day for so many families locally and for people that travel here each year.
 - Our colleges and universities here in Macon-Bibb have suspended classes and moved to online learning, just as they have across the state and nation.
 - Businesses have moved to online sales and curbside pickup only...and they are hurting as people stay home.
 - The Macon Water Authority has taken steps to insure families have access to water for household use and especially to use to wash their hands regularly.
 - Today, the Macon Transit Authority announced a 10-point plan of additional measures they are taking to prevent further spread.

- And so much more.

- I truly believe, and this comes from talking with our health officials, that the steps we have taken as a community had a major impact on our first confirmation being today and not days ago.

- However, we also know the state continues to conduct tests, so I am sure there will be more confirmed cases in our county, region, and state.
- That is just the reality with which we are in now, and we must not only continue our efforts but continuously review our operations to see if there are other changes that could be made.
- Last week, we asked our department heads to begin planning for what alternative work would look like for your consolidated government, with a focus on protecting public safety, maintaining services, protecting the health of our employees and community, and finding ways to support our employees whose home situation had changed with their children being home.
- We are looking at how people can either work from home or implement alternate hour and day schedules in departments that cannot work from home, all in order to promote social distancing while providing needed services.
- We must still patrol the streets, put out fires, fix stoplights, pay bills, prepare next year's budget, and so much more that people may not see. But we can find a way to do all of that while still supporting our employees and their families and protecting the health of our community.
- As those changes are made, we will be announcing them so people are aware of how they could be affected.
- I understand some of the concern and even fear expressed to me the past few weeks as we have seen and read almost nothing but the spread of this virus.
- But I know that, here in Macon-Bibb County and Middle Georgia, we have come together with a plan...a plan developed by experts in this field and implemented by groups from our small businesses and nonprofits to our largest entities and government agencies.

- I know you have been doing your part to take preventative measures, and we've seen the pictures and videos on social media as you've helped each other continue your children's education or found a way to support local businesses.
- And for that I thank you.
- And I want to thank the team that has been working the past few weeks to put this plan in place and communicate daily with the public on what they are doing and what you can do.
- As we all have said leading up to this...it was not a matter of if, it was a matter of when.
- Today, with this confirmed case, it is even more essential to continue doing what works:
 - Practice social distancing.
 - Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently.
 - Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.
 - Avoid handshakes.
 - Stay home if you're sick or have symptoms.
- And when the health officials have said we have flattened this curve and we can go back to a more normal way of operating, please give extra support to our local businesses that have been harmed from social distancing.
- Continue to check the Georgia Department of Public Health as they release new information every day. Read up on preventative measures on the CDC website. And check our website – www.maconbibb.us – for a routinely updated page of changes to our major institutions and businesses in how they operate.
- To slow the spread, we must **work** together...but where we can ...work together remotely.