March 18, 2020

Note from Mayor Patrick T. Baustian: Public Health – We’re All in This Together

It’s been a hectic and overwhelming few days. Like all of you, I have been following updates regarding the COVID-19 virus. The spread of COVID-19 has changed everything, and we are all grappling with how this rapidly evolving situation will impact the health, well-being and daily lives of our families, our communities and ourselves.

I want to assure you that we are watching the situation closely and are making sure plans are in place for an outbreak locally or regionally. I appreciate the clear and decisive direction that Governor Walz and his cabinet have provided to address this pandemic and the uncertainty it brings. The city is following the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance.

We have been working on the city’s response and steps we can take to encourage people to stay home, reduce community exposure, and slow the spread. We are also working closely with our emergency management team, health care facilities, county public health, schools, and service providers to respond and prepare for this pandemic. We are identifying ways the city can support those that are housing and food insecure or assist with other needs that arise.

To be clear, right now we do not have any confirmed case in Luverne or Rock County. However, we at the City take this threat to public health seriously, and as a proactive measure are closing public buildings temporarily. This is a proactive and preventative step.

Steps we are taking immediately:

- All in-person, non-essential city meetings are canceled or moved to online/phone meetings until further notice. Please refer to the city website for meeting cancelations and updates. [https://www.cityofluverne.org](https://www.cityofluverne.org). All non-city meetings planned for city buildings are cancelled.

- All city public buildings except City Offices and the Blue Mound Liquor Store are closed until further notice. This includes the Luverne Area Aquatics and Fitness Center, Blue Mound Ice Arena, Carnegie Cultural Center, and Palace Theatre.

- City Offices will remain open, but we ask residents to limit their in-person visits. Please call instead of coming in person to City Offices. Payments can be made online, by phone, or via the drop box located on the West side of the City Office Complex.

- For updates on what city facilities are open and closed and for information on work adjustments from individual city departments, please see the city’s website [https://www.cityofluverne.org](https://www.cityofluverne.org). Updates will also be shared on Facebook pages: City of Luverne, Luverne Area Aquatics and Fitness, and Blue Mound Liquor.
This developing situation has reminded me of the importance of a few practical steps we all can take and in many ways, this is no different than getting ready for a regular flu season, or a winter storm: make sure you have some food on hand, you have plans for backup at work or for childcare for an extended period of time, and check on vulnerable neighbors.

If you or a child is ill, stay home. This is particularly important in Minnesota with our strong work ethic. We all feel compelled to go to work. It is important to not go to work or school if you are sick.

And remember to wash your hands.

For Minnesota-specific information on the virus, along with resources about keeping yourself and those around you safe, the MDH [https://www.health.state.mn.us/] website has everything you need. Otherwise, read more from the CDC [https://www.cdc.gov/] on how to stay healthy and safe.

Some final thoughts.

Be patient, kind, and forgiving. Please think about our fellow citizens. Our preparations need not include panic purchases (hoarding) such that our neighbors are hurt or burdened by empty shelves and shortages of basic household goods. Our grocery stores will continue to operate and stock their shelves.

Be vigilant and use good judgement. It is critically important during this pandemic that we use our healthcare resources wisely. Emergency rooms need to be able to serve those with the most critical healthcare needs. If you have symptoms like cough, fever or other respiratory problems, please contact your regular doctor first or Sanford Health directly (Clinic at 507-283-4476) before going to the emergency room unless it is an absolute health emergency.

It’s difficult to know what may develop over the next weeks and months, but taking steps to plan for, prevent, mitigate, and control emergencies of any sort is another part of building community resilience. We prepare for emergencies so that we do not panic during them and that is what we should all be doing in Luverne. We are preparing as a community to deal with this threat on our health with education and commitment, working to protect the health of our residents.

The City will communicate with you through as many avenues as possible (website, newspaper, radio, social media, etc.), and we will coordinate with our health experts and community partners.

I am confident that Luverne Area Residents, working together, will emerge from this pandemic much stronger as a community.

Sincerely,

Mayor Patrick T. Baustian