



NEWS RELEASE

DATE: March 18, 2020

COVID-19 Declaration of Emergency - Updated

Over the past few weeks, it has been the City's priority to ensure that we have the latest and most informed details regarding the COVID-19 virus. Our priority has been the health, safety and welfare of the community, as well as the protection of our City employees.

City Council has made the situation a priority and Councilmembers have been actively working with other area organizations and partnerships to ensure the best outcome for the community. After reviewing the facts and circumstances, the City Council passed a resolution on the evening of March 17, 2020, declaring that the COVID-19 virus constitutes an emergency in the City of Port Angeles.

Considering these circumstances, it is important for our citizens to know that the City is committed to continuing all essential services for our customers. We have a plan for the continuity of operations for our first responders, water utility, electric utility and wastewater utility. These services will continue to be our top priority moving forward.

In addition to our essential services, other non-essential services will continue, though they may be delivered in new and different formats based on recommended social distancing. Beyond our normal services, the City is engaged in solution-oriented problem solving; we are looking at ways we can support the needs of our local families, maintain adequate housing and provide support to our local businesses.

City employees continue to be hard at work serving the community. The following divisions and services remain open at City Hall: Utility Customer Service, PAPD Records, Permitting and the City Manager's Office. However, we ask all customers to consider whether in-person service is necessary or essential before traveling to City Hall.

The Engineering and Recreation divisions are closed to walk-in access. These divisions are available for email and telephone support and by appointment.

The follow services are currently closed: Port Angeles Senior Center, Facility Rentals.

The Parks Operation Division is open and operating normally. Parks has also opened hiring of Seasonal employees.

Again, I want to emphasize that if you feel it is necessary to receive in-person customer service, social distancing is requested. We strongly recommend contact with City employees via phone and email wherever possible.

The City recognizes the economic challenges that many of our local families face. For that reason, the City has made an administrative decision to make payment arrangements with customers, rather than disconnect utilities. Staff is prepared to work directly with those in hardship situations to work out a payment plan, recognizing that plan may require adjustments if COVID-19 economic circumstances continue to remain. As a reminder, the City of Port Angeles also offers utility discounts for low income individuals on electric, solid waste, water, wastewater and stormwater. Earlier today, the City was able to work with OlyPen, a local internet provider, to re-activate portions of the City's Wireless Mesh Network to ensure internet access for local students. We are very appreciative of OlyPen being willing to step up during this time of need.

At this time, the City continues to be pleased with the partnership demonstrated by the Clallam County EOC and Health Officer Dr. Allyson Unthank. The City is dedicating resources to this partnership in support of the County EOC.

These challenging times are not taken lightly, however, they have allowed the City to fully appreciate the most essential services that we provide to our community. Simultaneously, they have given us an opportunity to bring additional innovation to the services we provide; innovations that we expect to be lasting improvements for the benefit of our City customers.

I ask that members of the public recognize that our circumstances are changing daily with little notice. As a City, we are dedicated to continuing to adapt our plans and respond to the needs of the community. Please know that, with the goal of achieving the most responsive approach possible from City government, many of these factors may be different tomorrow.

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