

CHANGES TO CITY FACILITY STAFFING AND PUBLIC ACCESS

Buellton City staff has been working through a number of issues over the past week dealing with the requirements of the Santa Barbara County Public Health Officer's Declaration of Local Health Emergency in response to COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus). One of the major issues to be addressed after the immediate issue of cancellation of major events scheduled to be held in the City has been the meeting of the "Social Distancing" mandates, which currently stand at 6' of separation between people. We are finding that for some of our office areas, this separation requirement is able to be met with some arrangement of staff, but in most areas (particularly those areas open to the public), it cannot be met.

Most other cities in Santa Barbara County are taking action to close their City Hall lobbies and offices to the public. While this is not the City of Buellton's preferred approach, it is growing more apparent that this is the only way to fully meet the Health Officer's order and work to slow the transmission of COVID-19 in the community. Further, given that a number of our City staff members are themselves, or have members of their immediate families who are, in COVID-19 high risk categories, social distancing by working away from the office may be necessary for their protection.

Beginning on Thursday, March 19, and continuing until social distancing mandates are relaxed or until another viable plan is in place, most City Hall staff members will be working from home. City Hall will be operating, but public access to City Hall facilities will be limited to essential business, largely by appointment only.

City Hall will utilize the following measures to comply with the County Health Officer's mandate:

- City Hall will be staffed at a minimal level during working hours. Most staff will work from home and be available by phone or email during the day. Staff working from home may be recalled to City Hall depending on immediate work needs or to report for emergency operations. Meetings with City staff members will be by appointment only to allow for control over the number of people within the building and social distance maintenance.
- The doors to City Hall will be closed and locked, with signs directing the public to alternative methods of contacting City staff, either by phone, email, or through the City's website.
- Payments for utility bills will be taken by phone, through the drop box in front of City Hall, or for those who pay cash, by curbside service with a staff member collecting payment from the resident at their car in the parking lot. Signs will explain this to the public in English and Spanish. Door bells have been installed for those who need to alert City staff to their presence for curbside service.
- The Planning Department doors will be closed and locked with staff on site on most days. Most Planning Department business can be handled online or by phone. Meetings with staff are by appointment only.
- City recreation programs are currently cancelled, due to school district limitations on use of facilities during the Health Order period.

- The City's Public Works field staff will remain on duty, and the City's water and wastewater systems will be staffed and continue to operate as usual.
- Public works construction projects will continue as planned unless a subsequent Health Order preventing such work is issued. City contracts contain a provision which allows the stoppage of work on City projects at the City's discretion in the case of situations like the one currently being faced.
- Library service has already been suspended at the direction of the Library service provider.
- Parks (and the restroom facilities within them) are expected to remain open during normal hours, but large gatherings are not permitted in keeping with the Health Officer's order.

The COVID-19 response situation is still very fluid, and information changes from hour to hour. Therefore, the service changes listed above may change at some point as well. The City will endeavor to post significant changes to its services to its website (www.CityOfBuellton.com) , on its Facebook page, and in the display case at City Hall.

For information regarding the latest Public Health Officer's order and COVID-19 precautions, please visit the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department's website at www.PublicHealthSBC.org . Additional information on COVID-19 and Coronavirus can be found at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> .

Please note that the City Council and City Staff are working to ensure that the City of Buellton continues to operate and provide the best possible services to our residents and businesses during the difficult times associated with this pandemic. We will work to bring our services back to normal as quickly as possible in keeping with Public Health mandates. If you have concerns, please contact City Hall at (805) 688-5177.