

I want you to all know that you are in my thoughts and prayers daily. This time of pandemic is so new to us all; some are scared, while others are almost in denial of what we are facing. But we serve an awesome God!

I want to thank the employees of the City of Jacksonville and the employees of the Jacksonville Water Works, Gas and Sewer Board as they continue to work hard to maintain continuity of operations, keep themselves and the citizens of Jacksonville safe and minimize the spread of the coronavirus.

To help maintain social distancing, all city facilities are closed to the public, including city parks. The restrooms at the train depot are still open and are sanitized regularly for the convenience of those using the Chief Ladiga Trail. Any city employees who can work remotely are asked to do so. Those working remotely have forwarded their city phones so calls will be answered as usual. Calls to City Hall will be answered and directed to the appropriate department. Emails will be responded to as normal.

City Council members are continuing to take care of city business. They passed a resolution providing for emergency spending. They also passed a resolution implementing the City of Jacksonville Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act and the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act, under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act passed by the Federal Government. These two acts passed by Congress are intended to help employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 or need to help family members who require help because of COVID-19. Also, at this time, Council meetings will continue as scheduled with live streaming on YouTube. Citizens can attend meetings but will have to adhere to rules regarding social distancing and sickness. In order to better perform their duties, Council members are staying informed by participating in conference calls and reading information online.

In preparing to lead our city during this time, I interact regularly with all the mayors of the county as we share information and ideas, realizing that the coronavirus pandemic is new to all of us and to be effective we need to work together. I have participated in and will continue to participate in conference calls presented by the White House, Governor Ivey, The Alabama League of Municipalities and the Calhoun County Emergency Management Agency (EMA). The calls have been informative and have helped me make necessary decisions I would have never imagined would be necessary. The EMA, under the direction of Michael Barton, has been very helpful. They have helped find needed equipment for first responders and have kept elected officials informed. The EMA formed the Infectious Disease Task Force. The members of the task force have worked very hard to keep Calhoun County as safe as possible. They are working on categories, such as planning, information sharing, testing, capacity of health facilities, public awareness and Federal Assistance. The EMA, along with United Way 2-1-1, has established a Resource Center manned by volunteers. Anyone needing information about COVID-19 can call 211 and you will be directed to someone for help. The Task Force is currently studying the issue of the possibility of local hospitals exceeding their capacity. They have identified several buildings that could potentially serve as alternate care facilities. I hope we never need them, but we must prepare for the possibility.

As you can see, many people are working hard to slow the spread of the coronavirus and keep Calhoun County as safe as possible. Be assured your city leadership team will continue to work hard for the citizens of Jacksonville. As of April 2, 2020, Calhoun County has 12 known COVID-19 cases and have had no deaths from COVID-19. Please continue practicing social distancing, look out for each other, pray for our country, state, county, and our great City of Jacksonville and we will get through this difficult time together.