

Monday, March 30, 2020

Dear Neighbors:

This is hard. Really hard. With each day that passes it may seem that things will never be the same and we wonder where we will end up when we are finished with this wretched time of waiting. We all want answers and an end to this, but the uncertainty continues.

What we know is this: This is unlike anything we have seen before in our lifetimes. This COVID-19 illness is NOT the same as the flu. We cannot wish it away or ignore it and hope it leaves us alone. As we have seen in other places in the world, even the best health care systems can be overwhelmed when the numbers of seriously ill patients reaches a critical level. There is no vaccine available at this time to prevent or reduce the spread. There is no known cure. None of us, no matter who we are, how old we are, how healthy we are, what politics or religion we believe in, or where we live, has immunity to this disease. And many of our loved ones are more vulnerable to this than others. The system at this time does not have enough tests available to adequately test everyone.

What is being done locally to prepare? At the City of Ashland, we are under a Declaration of Emergency that will continue until we can safely return to normal activities. When that is will be determined on the advice of our local health care professionals, with guidance from the State and Federal governments.

We have established an Incident Command Team that meets every day to update each other and to make decisions rapidly. The team consists of the Fire Chief, David Wegener; the Police Chief, Jim Gregoire; the City Administrator, Brant Kucera; and the Mayor, Debra Lewis. For the past several weeks we have been focused on making policy for Infection Control, management of staffing decisions to foster the continuation of essential city services, acquisition of protective equipment and supplies for our essential city workers who are required to interact with the public, and trying to educate employees and the public about the COVID-19 and necessary protective measures.

We are in ongoing contact with Memorial Medical Center, Ashland and Bayfield County Administration, Bad River and Red Cliff Administration, Ashland and Bayfield County EMS and Health and Human Services Department through the Joint County EMS Incident Command Team that also meets daily. Chief Wegener is the City of Ashland's liaison to this group.

There are a lot of people in the region working around the clock to make sure that we are as prepared as possible. They cannot do this alone. We all need to do our part. At this time, you should act as if you and everyone around you is already infected with this virus. It is the only way to keep yourself and your loved ones safe. It is the only real tool we have. Stay home except for outdoor exercise where you keep at least 6' away from others, unless you are required to work. Connect online or by phone with friends and family. Do not go out of your house at all if you have symptoms of fever or a cough. If you do develop symptoms of fever or cough, contact your health care provider for advice about what to do.

These restrictive measures feel drastic in a free society but remember that they are temporary and this will not last forever.

If you are overwhelmed by the burden you are carrying, remember that you are not alone. Reach out to someone you know and share how you are feeling. If you have no one else, the Bayfield County Crisis Line is available 24/7 for anyone experiencing a situation where they might need to speak with someone immediately. Bayfield County contracts with an agency that has trained professionals that can offer support or options for services for people in our community. Please call 1-866-317-9362 to access this free service.

Together, we are strong enough for this.

Peace,

Mayor Deb Lewis