



A Message from Mayor Rios

March 23, 2020

On Sunday afternoon (22nd), Governor Abbott held a press conference to discuss the COVID-19 situation in Texas, steps that will be implemented and new Executive Orders (posted on the City's web site). Here is an overview:

1. The State has limited testing facilities due to the lack of available testing materials. Only 43 of the 250+ counties have the capability right now. Like other states, Texas is pushing the federal government to ramp up the production and get materials distributed. Additionally, there is also a lack of personal protection equipment for those individuals who are performing tests and the health care professionals treating COVID-19 positive patients. A special Strike Force has been established that will look at global resources to meet our needs.
2. To increase the number of nurses, certain permitting and licensing requirements are being relaxed.
3. All licensed health care facilities will postpone non-necessary medical surgeries to increased bed capacity. Additionally, hospitals are encouraged to suspend private rooms if said rooms are capable of housing two patients.
4. The State is NOT issuing a "shelter in place" mandate right now. It's important to see how compliance with the original Executive Order is affecting the spread. Even so, what may be needed in larger urban communities may not be right for the less populous counties. Local governments have the authority to implement more stringent actions.
5. Residents (and visitors) are expected to comply with the first Executive Order regarding social distancing, gatherings of 10 or less people, limiting visits to healthcare and fitness facilities, and no inside serving of food and beverages. He stressed that there ARE penalties for non-compliance, including fines, jail time and mandatory quarantine. Any crimes committed in a disaster area are automatically enhanced to the next higher level, e.g. a class C misdemeanor is automatically enhanced to a class B misdemeanor. So far, the Rockport Police Department and the Aransas County Sheriff's office have not had any enforcement issues.
6. As more testing becomes available, we expect to see the number of confirmed cases expand. Even so, it is not a reason to panic. Keep in mind that the world population is 7.8 billion. Additionally, the difference in numbers between the Texas Department of Health and the Johns Hopkins reports are due to different reporting methodologies. The Johns

Hopkins figures include former cruise ship passengers, currently in quarantine at Lackland AFB in San Antonio, as well as “presumed positive cases” that have not been confirmed.

7. It is too early to discuss resuming in-classroom schooling.

The most important thing is for all of us to do our part in containing/reducing the spread. If you don't have a reason to leave your home, don't do it.

We ask that businesses and retailers to do their part by allowing telecommuting when possible, practicing social distancing, limiting the number of people in a building/store, and also placing limits on the purchase of certain goods.

As mentioned in an earlier letter, the City is taking the precaution of closing the lobby at its facilities. This means we will no longer be accepting payments at the Building and Development, Municipal Court, and Utility Customer Service departments.

For your convenience in paying your **electrical, plumbing, and mechanical permits**, please go to the Building and Development page or:
<https://www.officialpayments.com/index.jsp?JSESSIONID=TyPJSMJJ1G9TnZN!1474511089!1254460207>

For **Municipal Court**, you may mail in a check or money order. For credit cards, you may access the site directly from the Municipal Court page or go to
<https://www.municipalonlinepayments.com/rockporttx>

For **Utility Bill payments**, Individuals may sign up for bank drafts (<https://cityofrockport.com/DocumentCenter/View/12521/Bank-Draft-Form?bidId=>), pay by credit card through the online payment system (<https://www.municipalonlinepayments.com/rockporttx>), mail in their payments, or use the drop box, which is located to the right of the front door in front of the window.

We also want to remind you that unscrupulous people always find a way to take advantage and to beware of scams. We're attaching a link from the Federal Trade Commission and posted it on our web site. <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2020/03/ftc-coronavirus-scams-part-2>

Other federal and State weblinks are also on the City's web site - www.cityofrockport.com

Remember -- through facts, not fear we'll come through it.