



A Message from Mayor Rios

February 4, 2021

It has been less than 11 months since I sent out our first message about the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, we were still witnessing some remarkable recovery efforts from Hurricane Harvey and started laying the groundwork for COVID education through our web site and implementing safety measures.

Our first confirmed COVID-19 case was recorded in early April. Today, we've had more than 774 confirmed cases and the Texas Department of State Health Services has estimated an additional 270 probable cases with 152 currently active. Sadly, we've lost 31 of our neighbors to the virus.

Any death is one too many. But, when you look at the statistics, it doesn't speak well for our community. We have a higher mortality rate per cases (4+%) than Texas (1.55%), Washington (1.39%) and New York (3.66%) - and the U.S. (1.6%). The source for this is the Johns Hopkins University COVID-19 Dashboard, which, like many other resources and educational materials can be found in the COVID-19 tab on the City's web site.

The vaccines that are being administered globally have proven to reduce the severity of the virus. However, there are two important things to note. First, the vaccine is not a cure, nor will it completely prevent the recipient from catching or spreading the virus. What it does do is build up antibodies within the body to lessen the severity of the virus if one becomes infected. Secondly, one does not "catch" the virus upon being vaccinated, nor is the virus a component of the vaccine. In some cases, people have become ill, which is due to their body's response system to the antibodies, but the severity is not comparable to that of the actual virus.

As far as the vaccine, local leaders are in continual talks with the Texas Department of State Health Services and Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM) to implement a drive-thru vaccination program in Aransas County. We have demonstrated, on very short notice, that a successful clinic can be accomplished and secured thousands of names via sign up lists to prove there is an urgent need in our community.

Things are looking up as we enter the second month of vaccine availability. The Federal government has announced that it will be supplying national drug store chains as early as mid-February, the State is streamlining its systems to better meet the growing demand, and new centers and mini-hubs are opening in nearby communities.

In the meantime, we ask for your patience and encourage you to pursue options outside of our county. TDEM runs a site that lists vaccination sites throughout the state. It may be accessed through the City's web site or by going to <http://bit.ly/3tCSD4K>. Also, be certain to check out the FAQ on the City's COVID site at <https://cityofrockport.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/3132>.

Even as more vaccines are administered, we ask that you continue to be diligent in practicing social distancing, masking and disinfecting techniques. We must not let down our guard or ignore the mandates in place for masking and group gatherings of 10 or less. Please be safe ... for your sake, your family and your neighbors.