



CITY OF PORT ISABEL
"An Equal Opportunity Provider, Lender and Employer"
305 East Maxan Street
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March 14, 2020

Dear Businesses Owners,

Yesterday, President Trump and Governor Abbott declared an emergency in response to COVID-19 (coronavirus). As with many of you, the City of Port Isabel has been monitoring the situation with this emerging disease with great concern, because we know not only is it a potential threat to public health, but also that it has the potential to cause severe disruptions to our local economy.

In addition to a potential reduction in visitation due to fear, or due to the implementation of personal or public health measures, the situation surrounding this disease also has the potential to impact us over the longer term due to extended school closures. Instructional time lost due to these closures may be made up in Summer months, dampening any potential rebound as the situation with the illness abates.

Overcoming the challenges posed by this disease and its subsequent effects on the economy will require a concerted effort among all elements of society, as well as tough decisions. I know that many of you may be wrestling with how to alleviate the potential fear felt by customers and employees; how to maintain the safety of customers and employees; how to continue business operations in case of widespread absences from work; and, ultimately, how to absorb monetary losses. The City of Port Isabel faces many of the same challenges, and is itself dependent on sales tax collections during the Summer months.

When the threat of this disease passes, the business community will be key to the overall recovery of our city. With that in mind, I wanted to share some of the steps that the city is taking to address the current situation, as well as the message we are giving the public.

-We are not discouraging visitors to the area or suggesting changes to the operation of any private business. Our message is that people and businesses need to consult reliable sources of information, evaluate their personal situation and then make appropriate decisions from themselves.

-We are integrating social distancing and enhanced sanitation procedures into city operations. City buildings will be closed to the public, and staff will be available by e-mail, telephone, drop box, etc. Staff will work on a rotating schedule. Late payment fees and failure to appear are being waived.

These changes will continue until at least April 6, 2020. These two measures are being put into place to prevent a more severe disruption in services that could be caused if multiple employees in the same department were to become infected or placed under quarantine. Special procedures have been in place for the past two weeks with our EMS to ensure that personnel remain available to serve.

Hand sanitizer stations are being placed at the entrances to all buildings, hard surfaces will be disinfected periodically throughout the day and more thorough cleanings will be performed with additional frequency. We are also installing lotion dispensers in our restrooms, to encourage more frequent handwashing, and providing employees with alcohol wipes to clean personal devices upon reporting to work. These measures will continue in place after any facility and work changes are lifted, and will be part of our strategy to **restore public confidence in the safety of performing everyday activities and attending public events.**

-Events are being rescheduled. Large city events and gatherings set during the next three weeks are being re-scheduled. **We are planning additional marketing and events for the late Spring and early Summer to support a recovery in visitation to the area.**

Our marketing committee is already meeting on these efforts, and we welcome your input. Please contact Valerie Bates (info@portisabel-texas.com) or Betty Wells (director@portisabel.org) with any comments or suggestions on these marketing efforts.

-Resources are available for affected businesses. We will be working with county and state authorities to gather information about the impact of this situation on our tourism-based economy, and ensure that we obtain the funds needed to support recovery. Please contact John Sandoval (jsandoval@copitx.com) to report any business losses.

The president has made a preliminary announcement regarding SBA assistance, which can be viewed here: <https://www.sba.gov/about-sba/sba-newsroom/press-releases-media-advisories/sba-provide-disaster-assistance-loans-small-businesses-impacted-coronavirus-covid-19>

The Port Isabel EDC also has funds available for low-interest loans, including unsecured micro-loans. Please contact Lonnie Flores (lonnieflores13@yahoo.com) for further information.

-As this situation develops, we will announce additional measures to protect the public and promote recovery. Please continue to monitor our website and your Chamber for further information.

Finally, if there is anything that I can do to assist you with regards to this developing situation, please feel free to contact me at 371-1752 or by e-mail at citymanager@copitx.com.

Sincerely,

JARED HOCKEMA
City Manager