

MARCH 27, 2020
MAYOR'S UPDATE RE: COVID-19

I just wanted to give an update and answer some questions that we are being asked frequently.

The Mississippi Department of Health reports 11 positive cases of Coronavirus in Lafayette County today. Everyone at every level is working around the clock but there is still a lag in reporting of positive case numbers. We have been made aware by clinics and individuals of numerous other positive cases. I tell you this because I believe the low number of cases that is being reported is giving people a false sense of security. Covid-19 is in our community and it is spreading and you must take it seriously.

Unfortunately, there still seem to be those in our community who are not heeding the request to stay at home unless you must be out for an essential service. If your irresponsible behavior only affected you that would be one thing, BUT your dangerous behavior puts us all at risk. Stay at home. We had six reports of noise violations last night from parties. If you are a student who remains in Oxford - you are not simply a student at Ole Miss, you are a resident of Oxford, Mississippi. Act like one. Be responsible. Our future depends on it. And if you don't like those rules, please go home. Yes...I know I sound more like a Mom than a Mayor, but I mean it. We are doing everything we can to protect our community.

The Governor's Executive Order that came out earlier this week caused confusion in communities across the State. This is not a one size fits all problem and there is no one size fits all solution. Oxford and D'Lo don't need the same policies in place. I spoke with the Governor on Wednesday afternoon personally and he assured me that the Resolutions that we have in place in Oxford are allowed. The Executive Order sets a minimum that a community can require. Local leaders know best what their communities need. We will continue to allow restaurants to provide curbside pickup/drive thru/delivery options and allow the businesses deemed essential businesses under the City of Oxford resolution to continue to be open to serve our community. Retail businesses not considered essential may still provide curbside service to their customers. If you have questions regarding what is essential and non-essential please visit the City website and see the Resolutions and a FAQ document.

City of Oxford employees are still working hard to serve you. Our non-essential service departments have been sent home but are still wanting to serve the community. You may have seen them today on Highway 6 picking up trash. Employees from several different departments were able to practice social distancing while picking up litter and serving our community. You may notice that the grass is growing quickly with the amounts of rain we have had and we are not utilizing

seasonal employees during this uncertain time, so please be patient with us as we try to stay on top of these issues with fewer employees.

As news spreads across the nation about challenges in other communities who are experiencing the surge of new cases, I have received many messages about the plans in place for increasing number of hospital beds and equipment. We have been having those conversations over the past month and putting things in place in hopes of being as prepared as possible if that time comes. Baptist Memorial Hospital has a plan in place to increase the number of beds in the hospital by incorporating spaces in the hospital not currently utilized as patient rooms. They will utilize the Outpatient Surgery Center and Diagnostic Center next. Both of these facilities are equipped for patients. Hospital officials have plans in the works for expanding even further if needed. We have had two hotels offer their properties to be utilized if needed. Supplies are also being inventoried from numerous sources to be available.

Tests continue to be done at clinics, doctors' offices and the hospital. Please call before you go if you are experiencing symptoms you believe are related to Coronavirus.

So many of you have reached out with words of encouragement and offering suggestions and ideas. Please know we are reading every message and trying our best to respond but honestly, there are not enough hours in the day. I appreciate your support and kind words more than I can tell you. We will continue to put plans in place to protect our community. We will get through this. Our community will be full and bustling again. We will be shaking hands and hugging our neighbors again and propping doors to businesses open and welcoming in the crowds. We will.

Until then, please stay safe. I know many are stir crazy from being in the house for so long. So, clean out that closet or cabinet that drives you crazy. Try a new recipe. Spend time having conversations with your family. Call to check on someone who lives alone. Take a walk and remind yourself what an incredible community you live in. Your commitment to social distancing will determine how long it takes us to get back to normal.

We are stronger together.

Thank you.