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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City of Rochester essential services to continue during the Governor’s Stay at Home Order

March 25, 2020 - ROCHESTER, MINN. – Today Governor Walz issued a Stay at Home order to take effect this Friday, March 27, at 11:59 p.m. The community can remain confident the City of Rochester is prepared to continue providing critical services, and will continue clearly communicating what residents can expect in terms of City services, as well as regarding resources available to the community for both individuals and businesses in this time.

Mayor Kim Norton shares, “It is vitally important that all community members take this order seriously, and also continue following the guidelines and recommendations of our public health entities. Trips to the store for essential items are allowed under this order, giving us an opportunity to demonstrate how we are truly a compassionate community. I encourage the community to be sensible about supplies needed and not to panic shop at this time.”

What the Governor’s Order covers

There are three parts to the [Stay at Home order](#) issued today by Governor Walz:

1. Directing Minnesotans to stay at home and limit movements outside their homes beyond essential needs for two weeks, effective Friday, March 27, at 11:59 p.m., through Friday, April 10.
2. Requiring existing closures be extended for bars, restaurants, and other public accommodations through the extension of Executive Orders 20-04 and 20-08 through May 1, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.
3. Implementing a statewide Distance Learning Period until May 4, 2020.

The Stay at Home order requires residents across the state to stay in their homes unless absolutely necessary in order to protect Minnesotans from the rapid spread of the coronavirus pandemic. According to Governor Walz, “our objective now is to move the infection rate or slow it down and buy

time,” with the goal of avoiding scenarios where people cannot get needed critical care due to capacity limitations.

How this impacts City services

The health and safety of our Rochester community continues to be the City of Rochester’s top priority. As an extension of the ongoing implementation of the City’s Continuity of Operations Plan, preparations have been occurring to ensure all City departments can continue delivering needed services. Although many City services may be impacted during the Stay at Home order, City teammates are focused on our emergency response, as well as maintaining core services. Where possible, teammates will be working remotely to continue to provide services.

The following City services will continue without interruption at this time:

- Fire and Police Response
- Wastewater Treatment and Collection System Maintenance
- Snow Removal
- Prosecution
- Traffic Operations
- Water and Electric Services
- Emergency building and fire inspections
- Airport Operations

Functions in these areas will continue with the potential for some limited or reduced services:

- The City will continue to provide service by focusing on virtual, telephone, and electronic communication while all City of Rochester facilities remain closed to the public. All departmental phone lines continue to be monitored.
- Necessary City Council meetings will be held with options for remote participation. Although in person public attendance is not possible at this time, the public will be able to watch any Council meetings held on Government Channel 180 and via livestream at www.rochestermn.gov/agendas.
- Most Boards and Commissions will not be meeting through the month of April. Meetings that are still occurring – including potentially Charter boards, land use committees, and the Board of Equalization - will be held allowing for remote participation and no in-person public attendance.
- Further adjustments are being made to the number of Rochester Public Transit (RPT) routes, including park and ride locations, with service to continue on a modified schedule with social distancing practices in place. More details will be provided in a separate release from RPT tomorrow.
- Fire and Building Safety Plan Review, inspections, code compliance, and Community Development permits will continue to be issued and service provided to the maximum extent possible.
- Business license applications and renewals will continue to be accepted and processed by the City Clerk’s Office as possible, with the ability for businesses to defer renewal payments at this time if necessary. Special event permits are not being accepted through the end of April at this time.
- The Rochester Public Library remains closed, but online services including reference desk services by phone and electronic communications are continuing.
- Payment drop boxes at City Hall and other community locations for parking tickets and Rochester Public Utilities payments will continue to be picked up and payments processed.

- Core Park maintenance operations will continue, including garbage collection and mowing. Playgrounds are closed at this time, but as noted in the Stay at Home order, residents are encouraged to get outside and utilize parks and trails, maintaining safe social distancing.
- On-street parking restrictions have been suspended in an effort to encourage single passenger transportation, including lifting residential permit parking restrictions through the end of April and ending alternate side seasonal parking requirements early for the season. Parking meters are also not being enforced at this time, with those spaces intended for short-term use by those who need to access downtown businesses.

Additional details regarding the modifications to service across City departments will be kept up to date and available on the [City website](#).

City responses to the community and businesses

Work teams have been established within the City to help support critical community needs. This includes an Economic Stability Team and a Neighbors Helping Neighbors Team. Specific services and work continuing from these teams includes:

- Accepting applications for the newly established COVID-19 Emergency Economic Development loans to provide assistance to small local businesses as an interim financial aid to help keep businesses operating, including helping them be able to support their employees in times of declining or no business. Program information and applications are available on the [City's website](#).
- The Neighbors Helping Neighbors Team continues to support broader community efforts around food stability and services for persons experiencing homelessness, including opening of the Mayo Civic Center as a day shelter particularly during the period of the Stay at Home order.

The City is also considering some additional actions that can help support our business community, including:

- We will be allowing a full deferral of annual on-sale liquor license renewal fees until Nov. 13, 2020, in addition to evaluating options for businesses that have already paid these fees.
- Look for more information coming soon on potential changes to contract parking and parking ramps and additional small business financial assistance.

All residents are also reminded of steps taken by other levels of government that may be helpful to them in this time, including the Governor's previous executive orders expanding unemployment insurance coverage and issuing guidance on delaying evictions at this time.

While this is a challenging time for our community, the City of Rochester is committed to continuing to serve its residents and businesses with compassion and professionalism. Please do not call 911 for general information about COVID-19 or the Stay at Home order. All COVID-19 related information from the City of Rochester can be found at <https://www.rochestermn.gov/departments/emergency-management/coronavirus-covid-19-information>. Rochester residents are reminded the latest health information about COVID-19 can be found from [Olmsted County Public Health](#), [Minnesota Department of Health](#), and the [Center for Disease Prevention and Control](#).

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