



March 20, 2020

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mayor Paschall opens door to federal dollars through declaration

WEATHERFORD (CITY OF WEATHERFORD), Texas - Weatherford Mayor Paul Paschall announced the City is taking a series of preventative measures due to the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in conjunction with the directives from both the federal government and State of Texas.

In response to the executive order from the Governor of Texas, Mayor Paschall has signed a Declaration of Local Disaster. By capturing federal dollars, it will allow the City of Weatherford to seek reimbursement on dollars spent toward addressing the COVID-19 situation. As a result, local dollars can continue to be spent toward Weatherford's most important needs moving forward, such as public safety, streets, quality of life programs, animal control, water/electric utilities, library services, and parks.

"As things have developed in the City of Weatherford, the one thing we can all understand and agree on is that it is changing hour-by-hour," said Mayor Paschall. "We are actively working with State Representative Phil King, County Judge Pat Deen, Weatherford Chamber of Commerce, Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Texas Health and Human Services to update city strategies. Working with them allows us to have the additional assistance should we need it for our essential personnel, be that for our Fire and Police Departments, or our utilities. In consultation with city administration and city staff, city hall will be open for regular business. However, contingency plans are in place in the event that city hall must be closed, and employees sent home to work remotely."

The City of Weatherford's immediate and ongoing steps to close public spaces, cancel public events and assist local businesses with messaging, along with Texas Governor Greg Abbott's March 19 disaster declaration means the City is working hand-in-hand with the global community to combat COVID-19. At this time, Governor Abbott's Emergency Health Order requires schools, bars, clubs and gyms to close and for restaurants to offer only "to go" service. This is NOT a shelter-in-place order and does not prevent citizens from shopping for essential items or domestic travel.

"Our local businesses are extremely important to the vitality, quality of life and economy of the Weatherford area," said Mayor Paschall. "However, the way we respond as a community to this situation will determine how quickly we recover from it. We are bound by and fully support the restrictions set by Governor Abbott."

Below are the closures and business practice updates being made by the City of Weatherford with the understanding that further steps are possible in the future:

- **Weatherford's Police Department** staffing is still at full capacity, while also having the contingency plan of state assistance if needed. As a precautionary measure, the Weatherford Police Department has closed the station to the public, suspended the ride-along program and halted public fingerprinting. We have asked that all volunteers stay at home for the time being. Earlier this week we enacted an officer-callback response to all non-emergency situations. We are asking that the public allow our officers to save the in-person response to only emergencies.



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- Our **Fire Department** has seen no changes in our response time or staffing. Our firefighters respond to medical calls and are often the first on the scene to provide aid. We have operational awareness from our past training and historical events. We have a back-up system in place and the ability to take extra precautionary measures to deal with any potential staffing issues. This includes assistance from the state in keeping our fire staff at full capacity. We are taking extra precautions on all of our calls just in case. Effective earlier this week we have suspended all non-essential fire services, such as station tours, fire inspections, public relations events, and public appearances. This in no way changes our emergency response tactics and services operations.
- Our **Water Department** is and will continue to remain unaffected, we will not close this function at any time. Our water treatment plant is designed to purify and disinfect our water free of pathogens, toxins, and other contaminants. We continuously run water quality checks to monitor water quality and verify disinfection levels. There is no need to stock up on water supplies, as our water source is safe and reliable.
- Our **Electric Department** is staffed and capable of responding to any service disruption regardless of the time of day. This should provide comfort to our residents and businesses that they will have reliable and dependable electric service during this event. Both our Water and Electric Departments will remain at full staff, and upon speaking with Representative Phil King, we will be able to seek extra staffing assistance, as a contingency plan, if needed.
- We are continuing to provide our **Solid Waste and Recycling Services** as normally scheduled. However, should an issue arise, we have staff contingency plans in place.
- The **Weatherford Parker County Animal Shelter**, which services the county as well, will continue our emergency animal control related issues. We did make the decision to close the shelter to the public on March 19, leaving our phone and email service active. Intake from the public and visitation to the shelter will be suspended, including volunteering and community service. The Shelter will not be taking in any animals from the public that are brought to the facility. We are also suspending any trapping of cats and/or wildlife. We will continue to answer phones and respond to emails for lost pets that are at the shelter. We will not be facilitating adoptions during this closure, but we will continue working with rescue organizations to place tags on our animals.
- Our **Public Library** has shifted from allowing public in the building to a curb-side book check-out system. Patrons can request materials and resources through the website or on the phone and library staff will bring it to their car. We also are updating our website to showcase the different online resources for books and activities for checkout at this time. Library staff is also working to livestream Storytime and feature some at-home activities to keep kids entertained as well.
- Our **Parks, Recreations and Special Events Department** has over 835 acres of beautiful and inclusive parks and 21 miles of trailway that are still open to the public and will remain open to the public throughout this process. Our Parks Department is working to sanitize all park restrooms, pavilions, water fountains, benches and the 10 city parks, daily through the use of power washing and disinfecting. We encourage everyone to still get out for fresh air, while still practicing social distancing (the CDC recommends 6 feet and gatherings of no less than 10 people). Our staff is also working to get scavenger hunts, similar to what was posted earlier this week, updated weekly on social media to get your kids up, outside, active and having fun while still maintaining social distance. Lastly, to adhere to Federal and State recommendations and mandates we have suspended or canceled all our public events. We have also moved to close Chandor Gardens to the public.



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- **Finance Department** is working on financial flexibility plans and solidifying contingency plans for utility billing. Pending utility board approval on Thursday, March 26 there will be no assessment of late penalties or disconnects of utility services.
- A great resource for people still needing to do business with the City, while not wanting to get out is through our online and over-the-phone services. Our **Municipal Court and Utility Billing**, both have secure online payment options on our website, or you can always secure night-drop box, on the east side of city hall on Davis Street.

“This city is prepared as much as humanly possible,” said Mayor Paschall. “There are going to be hardships and disappointments, but we are going to rise above them. City staff will continue to update the COVID-19 policies, city closures and assistance for local businesses. Keep in mind, we have contingency plans in place and have spent countless hours training our staff to respond in difficult times like these. As a community we are showing our resiliency and resolve from individuals, businesses and charitable organizations. I could not be prouder of our response as a community. Weatherford is a strong community and will continue to be a strong community.”

For questions, please contact Director of Communications and Marketing Blake Rexroat at 817-598-4209 or via email at brexroat@weatherfordtx.gov. Additional information can be found at www.weatherfordtx.gov/covid19 with new information being added by the hour.

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