



Communications Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 19, 2020

City responds in wake of first positive COVID-19 test

While Mayor Harold Perrin and Craighead County Judge Marvin Day confirmed the first positive test of COVID-19 in the Jonesboro area, government and health officials urged residents to continue and in some cases heighten the one known practice to reduce the impact of the coronavirus: social distancing.

The identity of the person who tested positive and his or her condition remains private under federal HIPAA laws. “We knew this day was coming, and we certainly want to stress social distancing,” Perrin said. “I’m seeing fewer people on the streets, and I want to encourage everyone to buckle down because this is how Jonesboro reduces the impact of coronavirus.”

Perrin affirmed Gov. Asa Hutchinson’s mandate that all restaurants and bars close dine-in service, and asked residents to support local merchants by ordering drive-thru, pick-up or delivery service and using shopping assistants offered by various retailers. Public and private gyms and gathering spots have also been closed statewide to non-essential use.

“My wife and I enjoy many of our restaurants around Jonesboro, and that won’t change,” Perrin said. “But I have been using drive-thru and pick-up service exclusively for more than a week and will continue to for the near future.”

Perrin already had called for several of the measures Hutchison outlined, as the City has restricted visitors at all its offices and conducted fever checks of staff and customers all week. He has stressed the importance of small groups, as recommended by the CDC and Arkansas Department of Health. The City on Friday will test a strategy of telecommuting for employees who can conduct business from home.

“I like to see workers at work, but these are unique times, and we have to be responsible for the health and welfare of not only our workers but anyone they might come in contact with,” Perrin said.

Jonesboro’s senior and recreation centers have been closed for a week, and Hutchison’s mandate Thursday will lengthen the closures at Allen and Parker parks, as well as the Earl Bell Center. They would be used, however, in the case of emergency such as a weather-related disaster. The Red Cross operates these locations as shelters during such emergencies.

Other information for Jonesboro residents and media:

- The first of semi-regular FacebookLive briefings by the mayor and other health and government leaders will be broadcast at 2 p.m. Friday, March 20. Dr. Shane Speights will join the mayor on this broadcast. Residents and media can go to the City of Jonesboro AR Facebook page to follow. (Media with questions can text those to Communications Director Bill Campbell, either to be answered during the broadcast or for an individual response.)
- The City's COVID-19 email and hotline response system was utilized by the public 22 times on its opening day Thursday. People with questions and concerns can write to covid19@jonesboro.org or call 870-336-7244. The City has also debuted a COVID-19 page on the City website, Jonesboro.org, that provides many resources for those dealing with this outbreak from many perspectives.
- CWL has suspended shut-offs/disconnections temporarily. CWL has not set a date when this policy will end, but said it will be in effect at least through March.
- Scammers in other parts of the state have offered COVID19 tests, either by phone or door to door. Anyone offering a virus test is not legitimate and should be reported to law enforcement.
- JPD has reported no increase in crime, and both the City police and fire departments are running at full capacity. Rumors of anything less are invalid.
- While we're talking about rumors, it is critical that the community not panic and spread, much less believe, the many rumors that have reached City departments. Those include claims ranging from both reduced crime and reduced numbers of patrol officers on the street (neither is true) to a claim that the National Guard is putting the city on lockdown. These are strange times, but for your peace of mind and perhaps safety, please don't get caught up in the rumor mill.

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