

Roaming Around Reidsville

By Angela G. Stadler
Public Information Officer
City of Reidsville

As I write this column, we are in the throes of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, uncertain of what lies ahead. Anxiety has definitely set in, as evidenced by the run on toilet paper and disinfectant products. Bombarded 24/7 with news of additional cases, we are worried not only for our health and safety but for that of our family and friends.



Yet out of the chaos comes so many good stories. Neighbors checking on neighbors, especially the elderly. Local businesses and schools that have been closed offering free meals to those students in need who rely on those meals during the school year. Churches, nonprofits and other entities mobilizing to respond to the needs of those affected. These heartwarming stories, both locally and across the United States, remind us of the good in people, who put aside their fears to help others.

Our columns are due to *Eden's Own Journal* a little over a week before they are published. I'd like to think that by the time this journal goes to press and is released, the worse of the virus will be over, and we will be over the hump. However, that is probably not realistic.

The City of Reidsville, like other cities and counties across the nation, has been taking steps to address the situation as best we can. One of the first actions, in conjunction with Rockingham County and other local municipalities, was to declare a State of Local Emergency. Now for many already struggling with fear, such declarations tend to heighten anxiety and worry. Actually making this declaration doesn't mean we are currently at emergency level but will make us eligible for federal assistance if the need arises in the coming weeks. The City also created a COVID-19 Task Force comprised of City officials and the Annie Penn Hospital President that meets daily to react to new information and make recommendations. Keeping up the City's already strong partnerships with local organizations, such as Cone Health, Rockingham County School, local businesses and others will help as we battle this unseen enemy.

One of the first preventative steps taken by the City was to suspend all City-hosted events, programs, activities and meetings. Obviously the purpose of this action was to practice “social distancing” and keep groups of people from meeting when it wasn’t essential that they do so. As the federal regulations regarding gatherings went from groups of 100 down to 50 and then to 10, this was a good decision to make early.

Suspending organized activities at our RCARE/Senior Center led to the Center eventually being closed for the time being. This decision was based on the knowledge that those aged 65 and older can be most adversely affected by the Coronavirus. We know how much our senior population has come to enjoy the RCARE facility and the amenities it provides, but the health and safety of our citizens must come first.

As we went to press, City Hall was still open to the public, but we are encouraging people not to come to City facilities if at all possible. Residents can pay their water bills by a variety of methods – online at <https://www.municipalonlinepayments.com/reidsvillenc> using a credit or debit card (but have your newest account number available!) or by calling 1-866-254-7137. You can also call City Hall at 336-349-1054 to make a payment over the phone, but no doubt you will have a longer wait with increased calls expected. You can also drop off your payment in the drop box located behind City Hall.

Even for permitting and inspections, people are advised to call first to 1-336-349-1065. Some permitting, etc. can be done over the phone rather than face to face. Inspections currently are still being made, but callers will be asked to confirm that no one is sick in occupied dwellings for the safety of our employees. If a visitor to City facilities displays flu or COVID-19 symptoms, they will be asked to leave. Don’t be offended, it’s just the smart thing to do.

In other practical actions, we are going to be livestreaming our City Council meetings for the next couple of months so that citizens don’t feel the need to attend. If you feel you must attend, we will have precautions in place to make sure that people do practice “social distancing” during the meeting.

Keeping our employees well so that they can continue to serve our citizens is paramount. We need our public safety officials, including Fire and Police, to be able to respond to situations as they arise. Luckily, there has been no evidence to show that the Coronavirus affects water systems, but we still need to keep those employees who keep our water flowing safe and healthy!

As noted, the City continues to work with other entities, including health officials and our businesses, and provide support when possible. We have been supporting Cone Health and Annie Penn Hospital in its operations in any way we can. We have been broadcasting the hospital’s recommendation to contact them first by calling 336-951-4000 before visiting the

Emergency Room. Remember that before you can be tested for COVID-19, you must have a doctor's authorization.

We have allowed local restaurants and bakeries in the downtown area to have two parking spaces in front of their businesses designated for curbside pickup. Other restaurants throughout the City are also providing pickup and delivery. Continue to support local restaurants and bakeries if you can. If you don't feel comfortable getting food at a drive-through right now, buy a gift card for later. The Reidsville Chamber of Commerce has created a Facebook page for "Reidsville Area Carry Out & Delivery" that lets you know what area restaurants and bakeries are doing.

Reidsville Mayor Jay Donecker has instituted a weekly CodeRED message for citizens on Sunday nights to give them updates. If you live in Reidsville and don't get such messages, you can text TEAMREIDSVILLE to 99411 to enroll in CodeRED public safety alerts.

So, the key is don't panic but exercise every precaution to make sure you and your family stays safe. Call your elderly neighbor to check on them. Continue to support your local small businesses because this is a critical time for them. Contact the American Red Cross about giving blood since supplies are at critically low levels. And check out City of Reidsville and Team Reidsville social media, including Facebook, Twitter & Instagram, as we share information the best we can.

And while you are staying at home

Don't forget to fill out your 2020 Census! You should have received your Census form in the mail in mid-March or at least information on how to fill it out online. I had already discussed the importance of the Census in my November 2019 column with the main reason why an accurate reporting of how many residents live in Reidsville is so important is economic. The Federal Government distributes approximately \$675 billion annually to local and state governments. What often decides exactly how much a municipality or State gets is based on population. The more people you have, the more money you get. Cities rely on getting grants and other disbursements to help us with various projects, especially water and sewer. If cities receive grant monies, they are less likely to have to raise rates or taxes so it truly affects all of our pocketbooks. It also affects economic development because census data is used by business owners and developers to decide where they will open new stores or expand their operations. And a final reason is that population counts help decide our electoral districts, which affects who represents you on the State and National level. So help us on Team Reidsville and FILL IT OUT!"