

March 17, 2020

Statement from Oneonta Mayor Gary Herzig

Good evening.

I do not have to tell you that these are difficult and challenging times for every one of us. This COVID pandemic has presented us with an emergency situation unlike any we have experienced before. I know that all lives are being disrupted. I know that financial losses are mounting - and there is much uncertainty as to what lies ahead.

I can tell you, however, that we are coming together as a community - and by working together we can ride this storm out. Our Oneonta Task Force is being led by Assistant City Manager Katie Bottger and our City Health Officer Dr. Diane Georgeson. Also participating are our key Department Heads, Town Supervisor Bob Wood, Carrie Post representing A.O. Fox Hospital, myself and Deputy Mayor David Rissberger. We are in continuous communication with Bassett Healthcare, the Otsego County Task Force, the Otsego County Chamber of Commerce, and Congressman Antonio Delgado.

I can assure you that we are focused on your safety, your access to essential services, and keeping you informed. The response from our local businesses, organizations, and individuals has been truly nothing less than outstanding. While all are hurting, all are still focusing on the common good. As Oneontans, we may disagree and argue about the small stuff - but when crisis hits, the people of Oneonta come together as one. I don't think comes as a surprise to any of us.

Here at City Hall, we are working to allow as many of our staff to work from home as is possible. To do so, our focus will be on providing essential services only – and making certain that you can count on those services.

All of our First Responders will working as usual. Our EMS, Firefighters and Police Officers are equipped and trained to handle this emergency. If you need their help, please dial 911 and they will respond.

Our Public Transit will continue to operate; however, the number of daily runs will be reduced. No one, however, will be left stranded – if you need **urgent** transportation, we will provide for you. But remember - staying home, unless it is absolutely necessary to go out, is best.

Of course our water and wastewater treatment plants will remain in full operation.

In all other areas - there will be very little staff available. Some services will be made available through email and mail. Distribution of water bills will likely be delayed for a minimum of 30 days – of course no additional fines will be charged.

More information on the specifics on what services will be available and how to access them will be available on our website at www.oneonta.ny.us.

Please check frequently as all operational decisions are subject to change. If you cannot find information that you need, you may email me directly at mayor@oneonta.ny.us. I will personally get the answer for you or connect you with the person who can. We are committed to keeping you informed.

In closing, let me say – there is no schedule or timeline for this crisis but I am confident that by working together we will come through it. Governor Cuomo has been very aggressive in helping us to fight against this outbreak and I am very appreciative of that. Right now, please stay home if you are able to do so. If you are young and healthy, you might not fear this virus – but that does not stop you from infecting many others who are more vulnerable. Staying home is not only about protecting yourself; it is about protecting your community. And when this is over, we will help each other to rebuild and be an even stronger City of the Hills.