



**PRESS RELEASE:** The City of Clewiston is announcing some changes to its operations prompted by concerns related to the COVID-19 Virus and the resulting State of Emergency declared by the Federal, State and Hendry County Governments as well as the Commissioners of the City of Clewiston.

To set an example of compliance with the Governor's executive orders related to COVID-19 and adhere to the maximum extent possible the guidance provided by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the City is layering additional changes beyond previous notifications in operations and the availability to the public of certain City facilities for the protection of citizens and City employees effective immediately.

Until further notice, the City will be limiting access to public buildings to restrict physical interactions in an attempt to minimize the possibility of exposure and spread of the COVID-19 Virus. Specific changes include limiting public access to City Hall, the Community Development Offices, the Public Utilities Offices & Operations Facilities, the Public Works Offices & Operations Facilities, the Police Department Offices and the Library. Each facility location will be posted with contact information on the access doors including telephone & e-mail to receive public service assistance from the staff that will continue to work during normal business hours at each facility. Instructions will be provided at each location for delivery, drop-off or pick-up of materials or other items. Contact information is also available on the City's website.

The public Utilities building drive-through service will remain open to customers during normal office hours. In the case of the Police Department, emergency calls for service will not change from the standard practice. Non-emergency contacts will be handled by telephone unless Police Department staff determine circumstances warrant deviation to protect public health and safety. The Library will continue to offer services to the maximum extent practical through telephone & e-mail contacts and via use of the facility's book and material drop-off box. Other library service modification details will be announced by Library staff or posted on City website and social media platforms.

As for Parks & Recreation Facilities, there will be some modifications. Overall, City parks with few exceptions will remain open to the public until further notice. All activities, including public event rentals at the John Boy Auditorium and Youth Recreation Center, have been cancelled and will continue to be suspended through the month of April. Further updates on future rental availability will be announced prior to May 1<sup>st</sup>.

The City pool facility including the splash park area will be closed immediately and remain closed until further notice. Picnic tables at all public parks will be either removed or, if permanent structures, posted as not available for public use due to the potential for exposure posed by multiple users with no regular cleaning of the tables between users.

Public bathrooms in the parks that are typically unlocked and available for public use will remain open and will continue to be regularly maintained by City staff. Bathroom facilities will be posted with a cautionary statement that patrons are responsible for practicing appropriate hygiene as recommended by the CDC.

The public boat ramps near the lake will remain open for public use at this time. However, access to the covered picnic tables along the perimeter canal and dike will be closed consistent with the restrictions on the use of any City picnic tables in parks. The Clewiston Golf Course will continue to operate with changes implemented to ensure recommended social distancing guidelines are followed. Tournament play at the course has been suspended until further notice. The ongoing status of the course availability to the public will be continually monitored and is subject to change or be further restricted.

The City Utilities Department will be monitoring service and will work with customers experiencing financial hardships directly resulting from the COVID-19 Virus. City Utility staff will evaluate customer circumstances on a case-by-case basis. Customers are encouraged to stay current with utility bill payments as much as possible. The Utilities Department will be further advising customers of any other changes that may become necessary.

In closing, these changes are deemed prudent at this time. However, the situation remains fluid and the public is encouraged to closely monitor future announcements of additional changes. We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience these changes impose. The City also needs every citizen and business to help slow the spread of the virus by doing your part to adhere to CDC guidance. When possible, citizens should stay home. By all accounts, most citizens are taking this crisis seriously and for that we thank you.

The City is also pleased with the many positive examples of precautionary measures taken to date by the businesses and other entities located in the City aimed at compliance with the Governor's executive orders and CDC guidance. However, there remain individuals and businesses that do not maintain consistent adherence. To generate optimum compliance and in so doing protect the public health, safety and welfare, the City will be releasing separately a COVID-19 business notice that will be distributed to registered businesses electronically and/or by direct delivery stressing the importance of diligent compliance to avoid government officials' consideration of additional limitations and restrictions including possible closure actions. This notice will be followed by additional steps as necessary to ensure compliance. Please do your part.

Randy Martin, Clewiston City Manager

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