

Dear Council Members:

I am addressing you this evening in one of the most unique situations in world history, a significant worldwide health pandemic from a novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Our City has had to take unprecedented steps in conjunction with the Federal, State, and County government in order to respond to this public health crisis. As Mayor, I have done this in consultation with the elected leadership at all levels along with our staff and the advice of our public health experts.

In many ways, the City was prepared for this challenge. The City has invested time and money in disaster preparedness and response. The city has operational plans in place all for the departments to manage during an emergency, and this has served as a support pillar in maintaining our continuity of operations. While this has served us well in previous emergencies, one of the particular challenges is this is unlike any emergency that we have faced in the past. Our governing systems are being tested in ways not seen before, and decision making that at times require decisions made at the state or national level, are having to be made at times at a local level.

My primary focus has been on ensuring the safety of our residents, employees, and helping provide resources to our business community. We have done all that we can to make sure that our most vulnerable citizens have access to services and we have been in contact with our non-profit partners to make sure that they have the support necessary to be successful.

During this time, I know there will be many individual challenges for you and your family. There is likely tremendous uncertainty about your individual finances during this time. I can commit to you to continue to advocate at the State and Federal government for assistance that will help you during this time. Under our democratic form of government, the State and Federal government have the primary authority and the resources with which to help the majority of Americans. However, there are actions at the City level of which I have responsibility and I have taken action in those areas including but not limited too: suspending all water shutoffs; waiving late fees and charges on City utility bills.

We are willing to work with customers on up to 90 days. I have also issued an emergency order supporting the Governor's prohibition on evictions.

The other critical area is your personal safety. Social distancing has been advised as the public health measure to best slow the virus. As many of you have noticed, this has been a challenge for some of our residents to comply with. Gatherings at certain bars or restaurants, or at certain recreational amenities in City parks. This is not going to help us get past this crisis. It is going to take all of us working together to succeed. The City doesn't always have the local powers to enforce these orders from the Governor, but I have taken steps in order to help keep our residents safe. Yesterday, I issued a joint release with the Mayor's of Kent and Auburn encouraging residents to follow the Governor's advice and follow safe social procedures. Additionally I have ordered closed facilities within the City's park system that are not amenable to social distancing. That includes playgrounds, basketball courts and other City facilities within Parks. I have also asked our Police Department to advise and educate those residents and businesses that aren't following the Public Health protocols on social distancing.

I know that this will be very hard on our local economy. We have been working closely with our business community to make sure that they are aware and can access all of the State and Federal resources that become available to them. To be sure that our grocery retailers are able to receive deliveries in the evening, I issued an emergency proclamation waiving the City's noise ordinance for retailers to receive delivery of goods outside of normal business hours.

We have also kept our permit center open and functioning both virtually as well as allowing for by appointment in-person drop off of plans and fees during a one hour window daily. We have also waived late fees for business licenses and renewals, waived permit requirements for pickup zones for restaurants and grocery, waived permitting fees for emergency building inspection. We are encouraging electronic plan review and permitting online while in-person support for critical paper-only items still underway; for example Certificates of Occupancy. Prioritizing resources to support the new Medical Office Building at UW Valley Hospital so it can be completed as soon as possible. We are also not enforcing non-renewal of business licenses at this point and I am considering waiving future filing deadlines for the upcoming quarterly filing due April. These are a few steps

that I have taken to date, and intend to remain flexible enough to explore additional items as may be needed.

I want to especially thank our employees. Nearly 300 employees have been able to work remotely in order to continue to provide service to residents. Additionally, many critical personnel, including our police officers and waterworks operators that have to show up, continue to respond and provide services and safety to our community residents. We are doing all we can to secure supplies in order to help them do their jobs safely. Our employees have been called to service during these challenging times and they have responded.

There are many ways that the City has responded. They are outlined in the attached document which goes into tremendous detail on the various responses by each department within the City of Renton. All of our Administrators are here tonight to answer questions that Council members may have.

I also want to thank the Council and in particular Council President Perez for the assistance and support provided during this time. We are available for whatever questions you may have.

In closing, I want to thank the efforts of our citizens, employees, business, and other agencies in coming together for hopefully the best possible outcome from the crisis. We still need help from all residents to practice safe social distancing and health practices, like regular hand washing. It may not seem like you are saving lives and our health system just by staying home, but if you can do that you are literally saving others from catching this disease. Take the opportunity to check in with your neighbors or others who may be at high risk or vulnerable and see if there is something you can safely do, like running to the grocery store, to help them. I have lived in Renton my entire life. I know all of us working together can help get us through this crisis.

Respectfully,

Mayor Armondo Pavone

