

An Update from Town Manager Steve Riley

3/23/2020

Spring is here and Hilton Head Island has had to welcome it in a much different way than it's used to. By now, the Town would be abuzz with numerous festivals, resident volunteers preparing for the annual RBC Heritage Tournament, school proms and many other outdoor activities. But, the daily threat of the coronavirus has changed our lives immensely.

Town leadership has tried to respond reasonably to this new situation we are in and is making tough decisions. We hear reports daily of how the coronavirus has spread rapidly in other areas forcing cities and towns across the nation to take drastic actions. Coastal communities, like ours, are following suit to protect our community. We've made decisions based on the advice of leading healthcare entities and our State Governor's Office.

What we know for sure:

Things continue to change rapidly. Updates you receive today may be different by tomorrow. We ask that you be patient with us as we respond to questions, share information and provide regular updates.

[Social distancing](#) can help curtail the spread of the disease.

Governor McMaster issued an order today giving local law enforcement the authority to prohibit or disperse any gatherings of three or more persons. This will go a long way to support social distancing and the potential spread of COVID-19.

While the Town controls public beach access, we have to rely on private communities and resorts to control their access points. This caused some disruption over the weekend when our Mayor announced the closing of our beaches. But, I thank our residents, guests, resorts and others that complied with the Town's order. This immediate action will protect us in the long run.

New cases of the virus are occurring all around us in our county and in neighboring counties and states. We do not want to risk having an alarming rise in positive cases, which can lead to an overwhelmed medical system.

We all have a role in protecting our families and our community. I urge you to act responsibly, practice [social distancing](#) and take all necessary steps to protect yourself from catching the virus or spreading it.

Take a moment please to check on your neighbors and friends, especially elderly residents who may be living alone, parents who are home with children and even coworkers. They may need a phone call or a meal or help with an errand.

Thank our first responders and doctors, nurses and other health professionals for what they are doing to protect us. Thank our workers at grocery stores, restaurants, and

other businesses who continue to operate, provide resources and do their part to protect the public. Let's support them!

Here are some new developments that have happened today and over the last few days:

New Town Hall Updates

- Town Hall is still open for business, but our offices are closed to the public until further notice. Our staff is able to conduct business with you over the phone and via email. A searchable staff directory is available at <https://www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov/contactus/staffsearch.cfm>. We are working diligently to respond to your requests, but you may experience a slight increase in turnaround times. Thank you in advance for your patience.
- Town Council will host virtual meetings using video and teleconferencing. Our meetings will be live-streamed on our website and through Facebook Live. All Town Council meeting agendas can be found at www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov.
- We have delayed the collections of business license fees, local tax, and local hospitality tax until June 20th.
- Just a friendly reminder that our public beach accesses are closed for 60 days, as of Saturday, March 21. We ask that you comply with guidelines from the CDC and the S.C. Governors' Office about gathering in crowds and [practicing social distance](#).
- Tolls have been suspended temporarily on the Cross Island Parkway.
- The Beaufort County Sheriff's Office's Hilton Head Island substation, 70 Shelter Cove Lane, has temporarily limited public access.
 - For non-emergency assistance on Hilton Head Island, and before traveling to the substation, please call 843-255-3300 for assistance.
 - Due to coronavirus (COVID-19), and recommendations for social distancing, all walk-in public fingerprinting is suspended until further notice.
- The Breeze Trolley Service on Hilton Head Island, which was scheduled to begin service on April 1, has been postponed temporarily.
- Palmetto Breeze has suspended the following routes:
 - The USCB Bluffton to Hilton Head Route (Route 508)
 - The Daufuskie Island Ferry Shuttle Route (Route 509)

Other Important Updates

Only Flush Toilet Paper

- Local Public Service Districts advise residents to only flush toilet paper. If you are using anything other than toilet paper, please throw it in the trashcan. **DO NOT PUT ANY OTHER PAPER PRODUCTS IN YOUR TOILET!** Doing so can cause serious damage to critical infrastructure. Only toilet paper is made to degrade when wet.

Coronavirus Rumor Control

- Rumors can easily circulate within communities during a crisis. Check out FEMA's site on what is [rumor versus fact](#) related to the coronavirus response. This will help you distinguish between true and false information.

Tax Deadline Extensions

- The deadline for Hilton Head Island business license renewals is extended to June 20, 2020. Penalties and late fees are waived through the June 20th date. The deadline was originally set for June 30th.
- You have more time to file your state and federal taxes. Income tax filing due dates have been extended to July 15, 2020. Other state taxes remain delayed until June 1st, as previously ordered. Visit www.IRS.gov for federal information and <https://dor.sc.gov> for state guidelines.

The 2020 Census

- The 2020 Census will be conducted. By now, residents should have received an invitation by mail to respond to the census. The official census day is April 1, 2020, but you can begin responding now online or by phone. Visit 2020census.gov for details.

Healthcare

- DHEC's Care Line (1-855-472-3432) staff is answering general questions about [#COVID19](#) from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. every day. If you are looking for COVID-19 test results, please call the healthcare provider/facility who collected the sample. Results cannot be obtained from the DHEC Care Line.
- S.C. Governor McMaster has asked construction contractors and others in the skilled trade industry to donate whatever personal protective equipment they can spare to healthcare professionals and state agencies in the greatest need, including respirator masks commonly used in construction settings. Those willing to make donations can contact Mary Louise Resch of Habitat for Humanity for logistical coordination via email at mlresch@habitatsc.org.

Helping Our Community

- Thank you to the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry for establishing the Lowcountry Community COVID-19 Response Fund to rapidly deploy resources

to community-based, front line nonprofit organizations addressing the COVID-19 pandemic in Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton and Jasper Counties. To support this effort, the Community Foundation will match up to \$100,000 given to the fund.

If you're looking for a way to help your neighbors who will be adversely affected by COVID-19, consider donating to the response fund at cflowcountry.civicore.com/covid. Checks may be sent to:
Community Foundation of the Lowcountry
P.O. Box 23019
Hilton Head Island, SC 29925

**On your check, please indicate COVID-19 in the memo line.*

- Agencies in our community – Deep Well, Sandalwood Community Food Pantry and others - stand ready to help those our residents unable to buy groceries, pay rent or pay other bills. You can find a list of these resources on our website at <https://hiltonheadislandsc.gov/publicsafety/coronavirus/communityresources.cfm>

As always, please stay in touch with us.

We appreciate the community's support during this unprecedented occurrence. Town staff is regularly assessing the situation and will keep you informed. For the latest updates, please

- Monitor the Town website at www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov
- Follow us on Twitter – <http://twitter.com/TownofHHI>
- Like us on Facebook - www.facebook.com/TownofHiltonHeadIslandSC
- Get E-news delivered to your inbox. Sign up at <https://hiltonheadislandsc.gov/services/e-subscribe.cfm>
- Watch us on YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/c/TownofHiltonHeadIslandSC>