

# MEMORANDUM



**TO:** Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Karen Pinkos, City Manager  
**DATE:** March 13, 2020  
**SUBJECT:** Special City Manager's Update

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The news of the effects and impacts of the COVID-19-Coronavirus is head-spinning, as it seems to be changing minute-by-minute. At the City, we have been working non-stop to stay on top of what is happening, react accordingly, and communicate to all of you. We want to take every precaution necessary to keep each other healthy and safe. These are unprecedented times.

On Thursday, March 12, the city managers in Contra Costa County met the Contra Costa County Health Director Anna Roth and Medical Director Dr. Ori Tzvieli to receive an update. They did not mince words in that we should all expect that this crisis is far from over, that community spread of transmission of the virus is happening in our County, and that we must be vigilant in our actions to prevent the spread of the virus. One thing Dr. Tzvieli said that struck me was that “the success of our actions may be invisible.” People often wonder if we are overreacting in our response because in the end nothing may happen; but in this case, “nothing” happening is exactly what we are trying to achieve. Please keep this in mind: the actions you take may not seem like they are making a difference, when in fact they are. This article in the New York Times does a great job of explaining our need to “flatten the curve”:  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/science/coronavirus-curve-mitigation-infection.html>

As a result of this crisis, as of Friday, March 13, 2020 the City Council has declared a local emergency due to COVID-19 and the City is cancelling all non-essential public meetings, events, programs, classes through the end of March. This includes programs at the Community Center, the Swim Center, the Midtown Activity Center, and the Recycling Center. Details will be available on the City 's website at <http://www.el-cerrito.org/covid19> and we will continue to update the website as we move forward. I am asking our residents to take heed of the County, State, and Federal guidelines and orders and please be very selective in your interactions with others. Please only contact emergency services in a true emergency, including medical services, so that our health care system and first responders can focus on those who are most in need. If you can, we encourage you to do City business by phone, online, or email if possible. And although I am the last person who would ask you to not participate in City government or use City services, at this time I am asking you to do so only if it is essential.

I want to take this opportunity to ask the community to consider the seriousness that we are facing and what you must do on a day-to-day basis to help yourself and others. Especially if you are part of a vulnerable population—elderly or immunocompromised—you should be taking care to wash your hands, practice good cleaning and hygiene, separate yourself from

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large gatherings, and exercise caution in your interaction with others. If you are not part of the vulnerable population, you still have a responsibility to those who are and to others because you could be unwittingly spreading the virus. We all have people in our lives, of all ages, who could be impacted by this illness and we owe it to them to be safe.

It is against our nature to not be social or part of a community, but right now we have to be mindful of what that could mean. All of the cancellations and closures we have been hearing about make things seem ominous. But again: the outcome we are trying to achieve is that nothing happens. Even if we have to be separated from each other for a while, we are still all in this together.

I ask your patience and understanding as the City navigates these uncharted waters. We will continue to update the community as this situation continues to evolve. Please stay safe and take good care of yourselves.

Karen Pinkos, ICMA-CM

*Karen Pinkos*

City Manager

City of El Cerrito