



City of Leavenworth

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April 20, 2020

Community Members,

Well, this past weekend our state news was dominated by the protesters who are pushing for our state, and the nation, to open up and get back to work. Boy, do I get that! Enough is enough! However, also this weekend was a conference call hosted by Governor Inslee and two State Public Health Officials involving the State's Mayors and County Commissioners. The message there was also clear. While we might be fed up, we are not nearly ready to relax our restrictions. And it is good to see that the majority of Americans agree. People are far more worried that we will relax these safeguards too soon rather than too late. What we absolutely do not want is for a second wave of this disease rolling through and wreaking far worse havoc and loss of life than the first did!

The biggest deterrent to opening our economy back up continues to be the lack of testing supplies. Everyone in the medical field understands that our ability to move forward, even slowly, depends on our ability to very quickly test and get results back from anyone and everyone exhibiting some symptoms of this virus. The reason is simple. When such widespread testing can occur, it means that those who test positive can quickly be separated from others and isolated, keeping them from being able to spread the disease far further. We can focus our collective attention to hitting any "hot spots" quickly and more efficiently. Right now, we can only guess at the number of cases we have. The guesses are educated, sure, but they are still just guesses. And that is because most people are not being tested, even if they have the virus. Very few get the test, unless they are part of the most vulnerable population or are on the first line of defense. Thus, we have to stay away from one another because we simply do not know. Not knowing is not the situation you want to be in when you open the economy back up. You want a way to be able to tell. You want to know the true expanse of what you are facing. That can only come with robust testing.

It looks like it will be at least mid-May in this state before we will have enough test kits to distribute far and wide in sufficient quantities that we will be able to relax the restrictions. But what will those relaxed restrictions look like? Especially for us here in Leavenworth? We are unique in so many ways. But one very huge way that we are unique is that our economy is largely driven by seeking to draw outsiders to us. For many communities, what it looks like to open up means how to open to your own community in ways that makes sense, and keeps some safety practices like limiting the number of customers in a store, or keeping space between us. But for us, it looks quite different. How do you begin to invite people from other communities to begin to enjoy our hospitality again? What does that look like in a socially responsible way? How do we protect our residents and our guests even as we open? What do those baby steps look like?

I don't have those answers. What I do have is a desire to address these issues with input from our community members and our healthcare providers and experts. And I want to begin those discussions sooner than later. Again, we will work together to plan for the next steps. You will hear more from me in the days and weeks ahead as this new advisory committee begins to take shape, and as it begins to meet and plan for our future coming together. Stay tuned, and stay safe!



Carl J. Florea, Mayor

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