



City of Leavenworth

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April 23, 2020

Community Members,

I am putting the finishing touches on a mid-size focus group to begin to look at how Leavenworth emerges from this dark chapter. (by Zoom meeting, of course). As I have stated before, this is not going to be like flipping a switch to go from total darkness to total light, it is going to be more like beginning to slowly, very slowly, turning the dimmer switch a bit. Maybe a better analogy would be one where you want to get a great wildlife shot of a very shy and skittish animal, like a fox. You need to get closer, but you know if you move too quickly, if you get too impatient, if you can't contain your excitement, you could lose the opportunity all together. We are really going to have to be that stealthy as we approach this. For when the governor mentions a plan to gradually re-open, to start relaxing some of the restrictions, what he is really talking about is allowing people to come out a bit more, with social distancing, with limits, with masks still on, but beginning to open... but still close to home. I can imagine a day when I will be able to finally get a haircut. I can also imagine that I will wear a mask in to the appointment, maybe get my temperature taken, and then holding my mask on with one hand so the hairdresser can cut behind my ears. Ah, yes, that will be a joy! And that might be as normal as it gets for a time.

But how does that translate for Leavenworth? Those scenarios of gradually opening up, are really focused at opening up to your own community. For us, opening up, even a little bit, is about opening up to the outside world – to opening up beyond ourselves. Last night I was on a conference call with Representative Kim Schrier. It was very helpful and she is incredibly inciteful, knowledgeable, and compassionate in her approach. But one of her comments, directed in response to one questioner, in order to reassure her when she expressed her concern that this planned “opening up” would leave her community vulnerable to visitors from the outside, was to tell her that this opening up would not be an opening to travel, because that will be the last thing to be lifted. Now, I know she was saying that to calm this woman's fears, but that statement did nothing to calm mine. We are, by the very nature of our economy, one that thrives on drawing a diverse group of people. And that is our blessing, under normal circumstances. I don't have to tell you how very far we are from normal any more.

We are going to figure this out. We are going to figure out how to move close to that fox without scaring it away completely. We are going to have to be creative like never before. And one of our biggest challenges will be, “How do we do this in a gradual, responsible, way?” I am not afraid of people not coming, I am afraid that we won't be able to hold them back to a level we can deal with responsibly. Already, as I sit here on a Thursday afternoon in my office overlooking Highway 2, I am watching the traffic going by. Not heavy by any stretch of the imagination. But it is easily ten times the traffic I saw on the highway last Thursday. People are on the move. And they will want to come to us. How can we possibly be ready for them?

These are the challenges this focus group will be tackling. Good, creative people, all. Representatives from all sectors of our business community, and also our Cascade Medical Center, and the Chelan-Douglas Health District, and our school district. We'll work together to figure out how to stealthily move toward that fox to get the perfect picture. Because you only get one opportunity, and moving too quickly will mean our losses will only grow! We can't afford to get this wrong. People's lives are literally on the line. And the very LAST thing Leavenworth needs to be known for is... as the epicenter for the second wave of the COVID-19 virus. As this group begins to shape its plans and strategies, I will share them here. When we get it all up and running, you will be introduced to them all. If you are the praying type, pray for us and these efforts. And if prayer is not something you do – just send us good thoughts and energy. We will take it all! And in the meantime, stay safe!



Carl J. Florea, Mayor

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