



City of Leavenworth

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March 24, 2020

Dear Community Members,

I decided I need to begin putting out a daily email to all of you while we are going through this very trying, challenging, and difficult time. I can't tell you how much I appreciate all that you are going through, and how very caring and understanding most of you are being! We will get through this together!

I wanted to give you a little background to my decision to order Leavenworth to "shelter in place" and for nonessential businesses to close. I had decided to do this on Sunday, after making a couple of visits through the town on Saturday and Sunday and seeing too many visitors in our downtown core, most of whom did not appear to be trying to keep any social distancing. In a visit to our parks, I found families with kids taking advantage of the nice weather, but again, seemingly without concern for social distancing. Understandable, certainly, as we all get tired of being cooped up. But certainly not helpful in these times. Because our Governor, on Friday, decided not to order residents to stay at home and nonessential businesses to close, I felt a responsibility for both our residents and our visitors to order this shut-down. If I had known that Governor Inslee was going to issue his own order later in the day, I would have waited. However, I was prepared for him to do that last Friday, and he did not.

Some of you had pleaded with me over the last two weeks to take this action. I told you then what I still believe: I felt that the call to make such an extreme action needed to be made by those public health officials who are the experts, have the facts, and can make those calls free of the pressures of politics. It is too easy for those of us who are elected officials to make decisions based on political pressure, rather than on best practices and facts. I told people I would gladly help institute such a call should it come, and be a "mouthpiece" for any orders that the health officials made. I waited for that call to come.... It did not.

What I witnessed over this past weekend, despite the fact that our hotels had shut down, changed my mind. I kept hearing in every conference call with public health officials that such a strategy to "shelter in place" and close nonessential businesses was the best practice. I heard our Governor last Friday basically say the same thing, while refusing to make the call. Finally, I decided that I could not wait for others to make that call and start that process for me. I emailed my department heads at the City on Sunday with a first draft of that emergency declaration, and I told them that we would begin cutting our staff back to the minimum needed to deliver the essential services we provide – water, sewer, garbage starting on Monday. We would shut down our parks until further notice. The process had begun.

Some of you have asked me if the political pressure finally got to me. I can honestly say this: the only pressure that finally "got to me" was the pressure I felt from my own conscience. I simply could not ignore what I was seeing in the face of what I was being told should be done. I did not

want to look back when this was all over with regret that I could have done more, but chose not to as I waited for others to make the call. I knew that, without a broader order from the county or state, what orders I gave would have limited impact. Nevertheless, it would have some, and maybe even make a small contribution to saving lives. Believe me, negatively impacting peoples' livelihoods is not something I wanted or felt comfortable doing. The fact that doing so could possibly help save lives shows you just how unprecedented this situation is.

I get that some of you will criticize me for taking too long to make this move. Others of you will criticize me for making the emergency proclamation at all. I understand both positions. I also understand that you should only run for an office if you are doing so because you wish to work to improve the lives of all, residents and businesses alike. And if you know in your heart of hearts that such is your motivation, you must let the chips fall where they may. And that is my commitment to all of you. No matter what you think of any action I take or do not take, I promise you that I will always do what I feel is best, and not necessarily what is expedient.

Governor Inslee's new proclamation makes mine fairly moot, but it doesn't take away the struggle to do what is right and best. I will use this daily email to bring forward other thoughts, ideas, suggestions of how we can help each other, encourage each other, and come through this stronger together. It was my "grand idea" that we conduct a series of meetings together in April that I was calling LIFE 2.0. Well, this COVID-19 virus might just be calling us to live out LIFE 2.0! Stay safe, stay together, even while physically apart!

In the spirit of community,



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