



MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

March 16, 2020

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To the Citizens and Businesses of Solvang:

In an attempt to keep the lines of communication open during this trying time, I will continue to post these messages every few days and/or as we learn of developments surrounding COVID-19 (“Coronavirus”) and its impacts on our area.

We learned this past weekend, about the first diagnosed case of COVID-19 in Santa Barbara County. In addition to this, California Governor Newsom has made requests of California businesses and residents, which directly impact our communities. The State of California is highly recommending that all citizens age 70 or older, self-quarantine, and are recommending that those 65 years of age or older do the same. The State has also requested that all bars, pubs, wineries (which in our case, would mean wine and beer tasting facilities) and restaurants, either close, or put into place systems which would adhere to the social distancing mandates of six (6) feet to be kept between patrons. Many restaurants which remain open for seated diners are keeping capacity at 50%, only seating every other table, and the like.

We urge all Solvang and Santa Ynez Valley residents and businesses to please keep in mind that Governor Newsom’s requests are ***at this point***, “strong guidance”. The State is offering guidance for our own safety and well-being, but they are not officially ordering all of our businesses to close their doors. Santa Barbara County’s Public Health Department is continuing to evaluate the situation and has indicated that they may issue additional restrictions or orders, in the near future.

The City of Solvang realizes that it will be next to impossible for certain hospitality businesses to adhere to the “six-feet” guidelines, simply due to their establishments’ physical size or capacity. Business owners know their individual businesses best, and the City recommends that owners help staff to encourage social distancing and frequent, stringent cleaning and disinfecting, as suits their particular model.

The City is currently looking into ways in which we can aid businesses with less space, with the permitting process, to allow for specific, temporary adjustments which would then accommodate the necessary social distancing measures. Changes such as expansion of outdoor patios or seating areas – so those businesses can continue to operate and abide by the personal space orders or guidelines.

The City is also working on compiling a listing of Solvang businesses which will remain open in customer-facing capacities (tasting rooms, restaurants, shops, hotels, etc.), so we can respond to visitor queries about closures in our area, and for our own local population’s knowledge and reference.

We encourage venues which have larger spaces to make that known via social media or otherwise, if they are willing to host private events which might have been scheduled for smaller places or residents’ homes. Birthday parties, anniversary celebrations and the like, which would otherwise be cancelled due to space constraints, but which might be viable if given a different venue option which can adhere to the social distancing measures.

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The City of Solvang also requested a meeting of the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (“SBCAG”), which will be held this Thursday, March 19, 2020. The topic of this special meeting is how to sustain the County’s tourism economy during this time, including research into State or Federal funds which might be obtained for tourism entities impacted by COVID-19.

The City of Solvang recognizes that many of you are staying at home by choice, or due to remote work orders and school closures. And with that, we do realize that staying at home can not only be difficult in more stable times, but even worse now, with all of the new developments and time to think about things other than more normal daily life. This is an opportunity to get creative. Take advantage of having your family at home with you, and the extra time which we usually, would not have. Teach your kids – or yourself – a foreign language, or how to cook and bake. Once the rain lets up, plan a new garden and plant some drought-tolerant fruits, vegetables or herbs. Tackle those home projects which often go unattended. Hand-write notes or letters to loved ones, or even to strangers who need the encouragement of the community.

Please remember, a “healthy” community takes many forms. Keep others in mind during this time, those who might be hurting financially, or who are having trouble gaining access to their normal health needs or healthcare providers. Please continue to be safe, respectful of others, and keep yourselves as informed as possible. Thank you for your continued support, we will get through this together and as a community!

Solvang Mayor Ryan Toussaint