



MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

April 5, 2020

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To the Citizens and Businesses of Solvang:

It's been a week since my last "Message from the Mayor" and for that, I apologize. We are working diligently and tirelessly to stay on top of information and updates about the COVID-19 pandemic, so that we can address new information and act appropriately in response to it, with regards to the City of Solvang's specific needs.

We hope that you were able to join us, albeit virtually, for the most recent [Regular Meeting of the Solvang City Council](#) (March 30, 2020). Our systems in Solvang and many other cities were not set up to accommodate the online, virtual meeting environment and as such, we apologize for any technical glitches which you may have been experiencing and we appreciate your patience. Presently, our systems have been "Frankensteined" to support the new mandates. The audio/video professional will be working to replace these systems with new technology to provide a better experience.

The City continues to prepare for the potential, yet-forthcoming impacts of the pandemic and the economic cessation which it has caused. On March 20, the City Council authorized the waiver of penalties and interest for utility bills (water/sewer) and Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT). During the March 30 Council meeting, the City Council also approved a resolution for a moratorium on evictions, for both residential and commercial properties. Our goal is to help our community deal with the devastating fluctuation in economic activity, which has required that the government step in to help ensure our community's safety.

The Solvang eviction ban has some significant differences – **especially for our City** – from the Governor's blanket order. Solvang is protecting **both** residential and commercial/business tenants, while the State order only applies to residences. Solvang provides for a specific payback period of six (6) months, for deferred rent, while the State order does not address that issue. And, Solvang provides twenty (20) days for a tenant to advise the landlord that they will be unable to pay, while the State only provides for seven (7) days' notice. Solvang recognizes that some are seeking loans and other financial assistance, and therefore might be able to pay if given additional time.

The local economy is key to our City. Understandably, global and national economic conditions are largely outside of our sphere of influence, but as a community we have an obligation to work tirelessly to be ready to re-ignite the economic engine of the City of Solvang. To that end, the City turned around a loan program in a matter of a few days to help our local businesses, offering a \$5,000 micro-loan providing immediate cash assistance, to help bridge the gap between State and Federal aid.

The total budget for this Emergency Loan Assistance Program for Solvang small businesses is currently set at \$250,000. During the March 30 Council meeting, City Manager Xenia Bradford reported that the City had received 90+ loan package request forms, 50+ of which then received loan application packages, and that a portion of those loan applications have already been processed. Due to the demand

Subject: Message from Solvang Mayor Ryan Toussaint

Date: April 5, 2020

Page 2 of 3

for these City loans, the Council discussed the possible need to increase the total loan fund amount in the future, if the COVID-19 public health emergency extends and local business hardships continue to increase. The City will evaluate establishing additional loan programs to continue to help bridge the gap in any difficulties in processing of State or Federal assistance.

Also during the March 30 Council meeting, the City Manager reported on a number of other items, some of which were prompted by questions from the public via various forms of communication. One of these items is the current closure of our City Parks, namely [Hans Christian Andersen Park](#) and [Sunny Fields Park](#). Both parks are closed until further notice, in alignment with both County and State Parks closures. Restroom facilities at both Solvang City parks are still open to the public, but all playground areas, BBQ sections, and vehicle access or parking, are closed to traffic and use. You may still however, use the parks and trails for active and healthy living such as walking, hiking or running, but please be conscious of the current social distancing measures.

The week before last, the City made a difficult decision to lay off eight employees. The City regrets the need to lay off employees to ensure that essential services are provided to our community, at all times. The City is attempting to work with the Teamsters Union Local 986 as pertains to the City employee layoffs which occurred last week.

During the March 30 Council meeting, the Council voted to revoke the licenses of the “cosmetics” stores which popped up in Solvang in the later part of 2019. The City has received an incredible amount of complaints from the public (both locals and tourists) regarding high-pressure sales, hawking, cat-calling and following people down the sidewalks, etc. The Council voted unanimously to not only remove their business license, but directed staff to re-evaluate the business license vetting process to prevent this type of business’ return to our charming village.

As always, we welcome public comments and questions, not only in advance of and during City Council meetings, but at any time. The public should feel free to send email correspondence to the Council at Council@CityofSolvang.com.

The City Council also encourages the public to continuously [check the City website](#) for remote public participation updates. We regret not being able to see our community members in person at City Hall, but we also understand and support putting the health and safety of our community, first.

All local businesses and self-employed individuals should continue to check the Business Resources section of our new Solvang Resources website, for updated information about unemployment and labor issues, business loan programs of various types, tax updates, and information on other agencies which are available to help: www.solvangresources.com/resources/business-resources

On Friday of last week, the County of Santa Barbara announced during its [COVID-19 Response Press Conference](#), that specific modeling software being utilized by the County’s public health department has helped them to “guesstimate” a mid-May peak in the surge of patients in County healthcare facilities. The County stressed that this is not set in stone, but is at least a loose estimate of when we will see a peak in the County’s COVID-19 cases which require hospitalization. We will certainly keep everyone posted as to further updates and information, as it gets handed down from the County.

In the interim, as you may have seen, the CDC is urging everyone to please wear face masks any time you leave the shelter of your homes for essential activities. **The California Department of Public Health has issued some helpful Face Coverings Guidance, which you will find here:** www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Face-Coverings-Guidance.aspx. Please keep in mind, the use of face coverings in **NO WAY** replaces social distancing measures, and we encourage everyone to keep up hand-washing and social distancing routines.

My next Message from the Mayor should be out shortly, within which I will be stressing the importance of the City’s economic health, financial reserves and how they impact the community’s quality of life, and at the end of the day, your wallet. The goal of all of the City’s actions and programs today, is to maintain

Subject: Message from Solvang Mayor Ryan Toussaint

Date: April 5, 2020

Page 3 of 3

public health and safety while mitigating damages to our community that could ultimately reduce our ability to recover, which would have far greater long-term impacts.

We appreciate the community's interest in our City, and your respect for one another and the City's wellbeing. I will be back in touch, in a few days. Until then, stay positive, stay safe, stay **#Solvangstrong**.

Solvang Mayor Ryan Toussaint