



## MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

**April 17, 2020**

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### ***To the Citizens and Businesses of Solvang:***

As we continue with the health and safety measures in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I want to ensure you that the City of Solvang is doing all that we can to foster the economic wellbeing of *both*, our small businesses and our Solvang residents. Community is everything here, and as our tourism decline impacts nearly everyone's bottom line, it has been amazing to witness how the community has come together and how locals are stepping up to help support our businesses and fellow Solvang residents.

First and foremost, I would like to use this Message from the Mayor to list some of the resources available to our community. If you are suffering, or if you know of another family or individual in need, please make sure that they are aware of these available resources. The following are just a sampling of the community resources currently available; there are other business and residential services and more information to be found on the Solvang Resources website at [www.SolvangResources.com](http://www.SolvangResources.com).

- [People Helping People](#) (PHP) is running free, emergency food distribution services on Tuesdays, at Mission Santa Inés (1760 Mission Drive, Solvang), 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM. PHP reminds those in need that they have **dog and cat food available** at this distribution location, and that donations of non-perishable food, new books or new board games are welcome.
- [Bethania Lutheran Church](#), at 603 Atterdag Road in Solvang, has partnered with the [Food Bank of Santa Barbara County](#) to offer free, emergency food distribution every Tuesday, from 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM. Distribution is done via drive-through pick-up. Questions about this service may be emailed to [pastor@bethanialutheran.net](mailto:pastor@bethanialutheran.net), and donations are welcome.
- The [Solvang School PTO](#) has established an emergency relief fund under the PTO, to provide relief for students when the school is unable to provide meals and for other emergencies related to the school's students. If you know someone who wishes to contribute, they may do so here: [www.paypal.me/SolvangPTO](http://www.paypal.me/SolvangPTO). If you are a Solvang School student or family who needs help, or if you know someone who does, please [reach out to the PTO](#).
- New "Blessing Boxes" have been installed outside of Bethania Lutheran Church in Solvang, and in front of the [Buellton Garage](#), in Buellton (320 Central Avenue). The Blessing Boxes are open 24/7, for people to either donate food or household items to the boxes, or for those who need to take any of the available items.
- The [Buellton Senior Center](#) (164 W. Hwy 246) is also distributing free food supplies, and is also accepting donations. One of the Senior Center's main providers, [Veggie Rescue](#), is still operating – and then some – during the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to provide produce for so many in need.
- [Recovery Outreach Inc.](#) is holding free dinner distributions DAILY, 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM, in the parking lot of the Santa Ynez Valley Christian Academy (891 N. Refugio Road, Santa Ynez). Donations to this cause are welcome.

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***Now, a look at our economic situation.***

During the Monday, April 13, 2020 [Regular Meeting of the Solvang City Council](#), the Council took action to engage the [National Development Council \(NDC\)](#) to aid in the development of extended small business loan options for COVID-19 recovery efforts.

As you may have heard, the response to the City's \$250,000 Emergency Loan Assistance Program for Solvang small businesses suffering COVID-19-related losses, was overwhelming. In just two weeks, City staff processed 50 loan applications at \$5,000 each. That exhausted the approved spending for this loan program provided by the City as a lifeline for Solvang businesses while other Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) applications were in process. As of Monday night's Council meeting, loan requests under this program were continuing to roll in to the City, showing there is still great need.

Due to local business needs for continued and increased financial assistance during the stabilization and recovery period surrounding COVID-19, and the need for assistance in applying for additional, non-City loans, during the April 13 meeting the Solvang City Council authorized the City Manager to enter into an agreement with the NDC to explore lending opportunities which would best serve the community of Solvang. NDC will also provide application assistance for Solvang small businesses, many of which are having difficulties in applying for loans through their banks or other lenders.

NDC will aid the City in designing either a City-run Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) for business stabilization, and/or local Revolving Loan Funds (RLFs) for business recovery, once the point of recovery has been reached. Other lending options will also be considered.

Also during the April 13 Council meeting, the Council voted to extend the IDK Events, LLC contract through the end of the City's 2020-2021 fiscal year (through June of 2021), to continue IDK Events' work with the City on revitalization and recovery efforts, and the shift back to post-COVID-19 tourism marketing services. Under this contract extension, IDK's contract cost will be limited to percentage basis of Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) collected during the contract period. IDK will also be aiding in the production of some of Solvang's annual, legacy events such as July Fourth and [Solvang Danish Days](#), through in-kind donations of event production and marketing services.

IDK Events also announced during the April 13 Council meeting, an impending initiative in support of the Santa Ynez Valley's high school graduates, class of 2020, through which graduating students' photos will be posted on banners throughout the town of Solvang, for a modest fee – a portion of the proceeds of which will benefit the Solvang Danish Days Foundation.

On this topic, I would like to point out that IDK did not walk away from their existing tourism marketing services contract, which would have ended in June of 2020, even though their scope of work under that contract shifted due to COVID-19. They could have left the City when the nature of their work changed, but they didn't. They have pitched in wherever possible to help us in this current situation.

Other updates and policy discussions during the April 13 [Solvang City Council meeting](#) included an update on preliminary revenue forecast and 2020-22 Financial Plan development. The City Council will be faced with making funding policy decisions for the next financial plan in the environment of the Coronavirus pandemic. At this time, there is no clear date as to when social distancing measures will be lifted and the City will be able to begin recovery. City Manager Xenia Bradford's initial reports and preliminary analysis of top City revenues for the general fund, including TOT and sales tax, show a loss of \$2 Million in the current fiscal year and potential loss of another \$1 Million in the first two months of the 2020-21 fiscal year, if the City is not fully opened by summer 2020.

The City Council also discussed the importance of investing in economic development and information technology to position the City for economic recovery and efficient operations, as well as the importance of diversifying Solvang's economic base in the longer-run while making investment in the immediate to sustain and recover existing businesses.

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On that note, I want to remind all businesses to take advantage of the expedited processes that the City has instituted during this time, for deferred maintenance and the specific waived permitting. ***We are encouraging all businesses to use this time to reinvest in themselves. When recovery hits, we want Solvang to be firing on all cylinders.***

We know that a good portion of Solvang visitors spend on food and beverages while in town. As we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing measures for restaurants, eateries and bars will most likely remain in place, and those establishments will need to reconfigure their physical space to accommodate the continued measures. The City urges these businesses to take this time NOW, to make necessary adjustments to outdoor seating areas, or to expand outdoor spaces, in order to be ready to open and welcome guests as soon as it is allowed.

On another positive note, the City has also announced the details of the [Hans Christian Andersen Park](#) tennis courts reconstruction project, which was initially addressed on March 9, 2020, when the Solvang City Council awarded a construction contract with First Serve Tennis Courts ([firstservetennis.com](http://firstservetennis.com)) of Santa Barbara to reconstruct the aging and well-worn courts. All four existing tennis courts will be reconstructed, with funding for the project provided through a generous donation by the late Harry Stern, an avid tennis player at the courts for many years. The new tennis courts will be constructed of high-tech, post-tensioned concrete slabs, which are reported to last for thirty years at a minimum, and will eliminate the development of large cracks on the playing surface, which appear over time.

The reconstruction project is slated to begin late-April 2020. The tennis courts will be closed during construction, which is anticipated to be completed late-June 2020, in time for a grand reopening prior to the July 4 Independence Day weekend.

Solvang is here for everyone, local or visitor, now and always. Together, we remain **#Solvangstrong**.

Solvang Mayor Ryan Toussaint