

COLUMBUS CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT

Georgia's First Consolidated Government

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B.H. "Skip" Henderson, III
Mayor

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MEDIA RELEASE

March 20, 2020

COVID-19 Press Release

Today, March 20, 2020, Mayor B.H. "Skip" Henderson III has issued the attached Declaration of Local Emergency. This order follows the Center for Disease Control's latest guidance that people should not gather in groups of ten (10) or more with certain exceptions such as grocery stores, pharmacies, and medical facilities. It provides for the closing of public restaurants except for take-out service, the closing of bars, gymnasiums and other indoor recreational facilities, and body care salons of all types. Additional restrictions are imposed on other retail establishments depending on their square footage and ability to provide social distancing. These restrictions shall take effect at midnight tonight and shall extend until April 3, 2020 unless further amended by the Mayor or City Council.

This is the latest action in an ongoing effort by City leadership to "flatten the curve" of this virus. The Mayor still hopes that Columbus will not be as affected by this virus as some other cities, but he also recognizes that it would be irresponsible not to take steps to try to mitigate any crisis. This newest Order is an attempt to limit the rapid spread of this disease so that our local hospitals can manage potential cases without being overwhelmed all at one time. If Columbus can do that, hospitals will be able to more effectively utilize care and resources for those who need them.

To accomplish this, Columbus citizens will have to work together. The citizens of our community will ultimately determine the success or failure of these actions. The City government and local hospitals can and are preparing for the worst-case scenario, but everyone hopes that, by practicing personal responsibility, citizens can help avoid the difficult circumstances in which other cities have found themselves.

To be clear, the Office of the Mayor; City, State, and Federal governments; the Health Department; and the Center for Disease Control recommend self-isolating as much as possible, washing your hands regularly and for twenty (20) seconds, and keeping up with the latest reputable news. We will get through this, but everyone in the community must work together to help Columbus avoid the spread of this dangerous virus.

Useful Information:

CDC – Frequently Asked Questions:

- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html

CDC – How to Protect Yourself:

- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html

CDC – Animals and Coronavirus Disease 2019:

- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/animals.html

The President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America: 15 Days to Slow the Spread:

- www.bit.ly/2Wrb9Pk

For additional information:

Mayor Skip Henderson

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DECLARATION OF LOCAL EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, Columbus, Georgia has experienced an event of critical significance as a result of the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19); and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control ("CDC") has recommended that all events with more than ten (10) people should be cancelled to curb the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, in the judgment of the Mayor of Columbus, Georgia, with advice from the Emergency Management Agency and state and local health officials, there exist emergency circumstances located in Columbus, Georgia requiring extraordinary and immediate corrective actions for the protection of the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Columbus, Georgia; and

WHEREAS, to prevent or minimize illness or injury to people and damage to property resulting from this event.

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority vested in the Mayor by local and state law,

IT IS HEREBY DECLARED that a local state of emergency exists in Columbus, Georgia and shall continue until the conditions requiring this declaration are abated.

THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

Section 1.

That, due to dangers from the possible spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and to protect the safety of all citizens, a local emergency is hereby declared in Columbus, Georgia.

Section 2.

That, pursuant to authority contained in state law and Ordinance No. 11-56, the Columbus/Muscogee County Emergency Management Division, Columbus Fire and Emergency Medical Services, shall activate the Emergency Operations Plan.

Section 3.

That, all public or private Community Gatherings of more than ten (10) people anywhere within Columbus, Georgia are prohibited for the duration of this Order. A "Community Gathering" is defined as any indoor or outdoor event or convening, subject to the exceptions below, that brings together or is likely to bring together ten (10) or more persons at the same time in a single room or other single confined or enclosed space, such as an auditorium, stadium (indoor or outdoor), tent arena or event center, music venue, meeting hall, conference center, large cafeteria, or any other confined indoor or outdoor space. A community gathering does not include the following or similar uses, so long as persons attending the Community gathering are generally not within six (6) feet of each other for extended periods: (1) spaces where persons may be in transit or waiting for transit such as airports, bus stations or terminals; (2) office or manufacturing space, child-care facilities, residential buildings or any type of temporary sheltering or housing; (3) grocery stores or pharmacies; and (4) hospital or medical facilities.

Notwithstanding the previous paragraph, the following business use categories will be regulated as follows: (1) Restaurants open to the public shall close except to provide take-out or curbside service to include alcoholic beverages in sealed containers which they are otherwise licensed to dispense; (2) All

business locations with on-premise consumption alcoholic beverage licenses which are not also restaurants shall be closed for business; (3) All establishments providing body care services which require close physical contact between the provider and client such as barbering, hair design, cosmetology, esthetics, massage therapy (except for medically licensed physical therapy), tattooing, or nail care shall be closed for business; (4) All indoor recreation facilities, to include gyms, health studios, indoor amusement facilities, bowling alleys, pool halls and theaters shall be closed for business; and (5) All other retail sales establishments will be permitted to remain open subject to the following restrictions : Businesses having less than 30,000 square feet shall have no more than ten (10) customers on their premises at any one time, and businesses with more than 30,000 square feet of retail space shall have no more than fifty (50) customers on their premises at any one time; and customers shall generally not be within six (6) feet of each other for extended periods.

Section 3 of this declaration shall take effect at midnight on March 20, 2020 and shall expire by its own terms on April 3, 2020 unless extended by further action of the Mayor or Columbus Council. Violations of this order will be punished as provided by Section 1-8 of the Columbus Code.

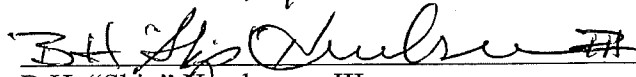
Section 4.

In order to lessen the burdens of citizens and reduce the possibility of congregation in public buildings, the following deadlines imposed by local law are hereby extended by this declaration:

- (1) The April 1 deadline for obtaining business licenses and paying any business occupational tax as required by Columbus Code Sections 19-47 and 19-53 is hereby extended to May 1, 2020;
- (2) All Alcohol Distributor Excise tax: Mixed Drinks Excise tax and Vehicle Rental Excise tax payments falling due during the month of April 2020, shall be extended by thirty (30) days; and
- (3) Any action, determination, or decision required of an official, board, or commission of the Columbus Consolidated Government under the provisions of the Columbus Code is hereby extended by thirty (30) days.

SO ORDERED,

This 20th day of March, 2020.



B.H. "Skip" Henderson, III,
Mayor of Columbus, Georgia