



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date:** Wednesday, March 18, 2020  
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**MEDIA ADVISORY: Coronavirus Update 03.18.2020**

**CANTON, OHIO** – This Release is issued by Thomas M. Bernabei, Mayor of Canton.

- 1) I need to emphasize and reemphasize: the Coronavirus is a very serious public health concern. It is a very dangerous flu very different from past related infectious diseases and is particularly dangerous to persons over the ages of 70, and increasingly dangerous as one gets older. It is particularly dangerous in that persons who become infected often show no symptoms and therefore can spread the disease unknowingly. Therefore, IT IS ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL that all directives from our Public Health authorities, the Canton, Stark County and Ohio Departments of Health, and Ohio Governor's office be closely followed.
- 2) At the same time, I need to emphasize that while it is a very serious public health concern, it is not a cause for panic. The number of positive cases of COVID-19 remains at 3 in Stark County! REMAIN CALM!!!
- 3) City government will remain open for business without interruption. Local government has obligations different from private businesses and different as well from the state and federal government. We directly serve and impact our local population on a daily basis.
- 4)
  - a) We will provide on a 24/7 basis: Police, Fire, EMS, and Dispatch 911 services without interruption.
  - b) We will provide on a 24/7 basis public services such as: Health, Water, Sewer, Storm Sewer and Traffic Signalization.
  - c) We will keep open other departments which provide support services to insure continuity of operations for Essential services: Human Resources, Information Technology (IT), Civil Service, Department of Motor Vehicles, Building Maintenance, and Law, Treasury, Auditor and Purchasing.
  - d) We will continue to repair streets, operate our parks, build bridges, inspect buildings and code enforcement, and administer Community Development and Fair Housing.
- 5) City government also plays an important role to the community through our purchasing power and capital projects that help keep our taxpaying citizens employed, which we will continue to do.
- 6) City government will protect our employees while performing our vital services. The two are not mutually exclusive. We are reviewing in detail the operations of all departments. We are reviewing best practices regarding use of sick leave, vacation, unpaid leave and work from home. We are not presently contemplating the furlough or layoff of employees.
- 7) Consistent with the purpose of restrictions being put in place regarding public gatherings and minimization of non-essential social contact and social distancing, we have placed limitations on public access to various governmental offices. As a general rule, all non-essential access to public offices is restricted and we ask that

the public call or email any office for which they have a question. Please visit the City of Canton's website at [www.cantonohio.gov](http://www.cantonohio.gov) for more specific information and the contact information for each office. Various offices within City government: Courts, Law Department, Treasury, Parks and Recreation, have published special rules which also can be found on the City's website.

- 8) Government cannot become grossly inefficient or careless in our operations during the COVID-19 crisis. There will be substantial reductions in all revenue sources which we anticipate will be much more significant than the 2008-2010 recession which saw reductions of @ 10%. We need to remain fiscally responsible and alert. Unlike the federal government, with trillions of dollars in expenditures exceeding revenues, local government by law must operate on a balanced budget.
- 9) And finally, many members of our community in the restaurant, tavern, entertainment and other service industries are closed down and without jobs or income. I therefore encourage everyone with jobs and with income to support our local restaurants and other providers, with compassion for their situation.
- 10) The public response to COVID-19 is increasing and changing every day. The number of confirmed cases will grow every day. To that extent, we are constantly reviewing health and operational protocols, which may and will be subject to change. Please stay informed. City government will continue to update our website with public notices as necessary.

**You may access these links for the latest updated information:**

**City of Canton Government:** [cantonohio.gov](http://cantonohio.gov)

**City of Canton Health Department:** [cantonhealth.org](http://cantonhealth.org)

**Ohio Health Department:** [coronavirus.ohio.gov](http://coronavirus.ohio.gov)

**Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** [cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

People with questions about COVID-19 can call the Ohio Department of Health COVID-19 Call Center, 7 days a week from 9am – 8pm at 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

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