



SPECIAL UPDATE ON ELECTIONS, COVID-19 AND NEW CITY POLICIES

The crisis surrounding the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus has resulted in a variety of changes in the way we do "business as usual". This special report provides information on the postponement of our April 7 Municipal Elections; the availability of a template that could help local businesses create a plan of action that fits their needs best; and an update on rules established by the city to help inhibit the spread of this potentially deadly virus. Other school policies are listed in this report as well.

APRIL 7TH MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS POSTPONED UNTIL JUNE 2, 2020

On March 18, Missouri Governor Mike Parson signed an executive order postponing all county and municipal elections originally scheduled for April 7 until June 2, 2020. The action affects all county, municipal school and special district elections in Missouri and was taken in response to the emergency created by the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus.

According to a news release from the Governor's office, the executive order requires local election authorities to follow these specific guidelines:

- Publish notice of the new election date.
- The closing date to register to vote in this election remains March 11. (Which has already passed.)
- The deadline for filing as a write-in candidate for office remains March 27 at 5 p.m.
- The deadline to apply for an absentee ballot shall be May 20.
- In-person absentee ballots may be cast until 5 p.m. on June 1.
- The deadline by which absentee ballots must be received by the election authority shall be 7 p.m. on June 2.
- Military and overseas voters must request a ballot from an election authority by 5 p.m. on May 29, and the deadline for local election authorities to make ballots available to such voters is April 18. Military and overseas ballots must be received by the election authority by June 5.
- Local election authorities are also directed to post information on their website, use social media if available, issue press release, conduct public appearances, and directly contact stakeholders such as candidates.

In Missouri, voters are required to provide a reason when requesting an absentee ballot, and those reasons have NOT changed. According to the Missouri Secretary of State's office, these are the reasons you can use to request an absentee ballot:

1. Absence on Election Day from the jurisdiction of the election authority in which such voter is registered to vote;
2. Incapacity or confinement due to illness or physical disability, including a person who is primarily responsible for the physical care of a person who is incapacitated or confined due to illness or disability;
3. Religious belief or practice;
4. Employment as an election authority, as a member of an election authority, or by an election authority at a location other than such voter's polling place;
5. Incarceration, provided all qualifications for voting are retained.
6. Certified participation in the address confidentiality program established under sections 589.660 to 589.681 because of safety concerns.

In Columbia, this action will delay elections for candidates running for Columbia City Council seats in Ward 1 and Ward 5; the selection of three members for the Columbia School Board; the election of two members of the Boone Hospital Board of Trustees; and voter approval or disapproval of a \$20 million CPS school bond issue. In those instances where the regular term of office expires before the new election is held, the incumbent members of the councils or boards will continue to serve until a replacement is sworn in.

[FOR ADDITIONAL ONGOING INFORMATION ON THIS TOPIC,
VISIT THE BOONE COUNTY CLERK WEBSITE AT THIS LINK](#)

(Information regarding the new election date and procedures will be posted on the website soon.)

COVID-19 PLANNING TOOL

Local businesses, both large and small are bound to be affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. And, although the city is taking measures to combat the spread of the virus and protect the general health of the public, individual businesses can take action, too.

But where do you start? Each business has a different level of sophistication regarding the decision-making process ranging from non-existent to highly integrated information sharing systems. If your business is on the lower end of that scale – or if you have not yet taken steps to address the COVID-19 issue on an internal basis, the following link may be of help to you.

It is a toolkit that was developed by Fusion Risk Management Consultants and provides businesses with a template that includes important topics for consideration and suggests elements that may be included in any plan of action involving the delivery of services, employee health and the interface with the general public.

The information is free, although the company will provide more in-depth consulting on a fee basis.

[LINK TO THE COVID-19 TOOL KIT HERE](#)

CITY DECLARES CITY-WIDE EMERGENCY AND INVOKES SOME SPECIAL RULES

During the March 16, 2020 City Council regular meeting, the Columbia City Council passed, and City Manager John Glascock signed, an emergency declaration giving the City Manager and Director of Public Health the ability to take special measures relating to the civil defense and public health of Columbia residents. Here are some of the things that the city CAN do under the authority of the emergency declaration:

POTENTIAL LIST OF POWERS ASSUMED BY THE CITY UNDER EMERGENCY DECLARATION

(NOTE: At this time, not all of these powers have been invoked.

This is simply a list of what they CAN do, if necessary.)

- Prohibiting the congregation or gathering of more than 50 people;
- Prohibiting all gatherings of more than 10 people for individuals who are at higher risk for severe illness, such as seniors (including gatherings at retirement and assisted living facilities);
- Limiting all businesses and places of public accommodation to one-half the legal occupancy of any such buildings or locations utilized or a maximum of 50 people (including staff located on the premises), whichever is less. This includes, but is not limited to, all bars, restaurants, meeting halls, places of worship, etc.;
- Strongly encouraging the cancelation of any event or gathering in excess of 25 people, regardless of whether such event is public or private;
- Encouraging any small event or gathering which continues to be held by the organizer to adopt additional social distancing modifications for participants;
- Prohibiting all concerts, conferences and sporting events;
- Suspending in person classes of all schools and colleges while continuing essential operations for such institutions;
- Closing all gyms, movie theaters, libraries and community centers;
- Strongly encouraging employers to require employees to work remotely, if possible;
- Leading by example by canceling all public events of any size;
- Requiring all city employees to work remotely to the extent possible;
- Taking actions to enforce any health recommendations from federal and state authorities;
- Restricting public and private assemblies within the city based upon CDC recommended guidelines and orders of the Director of Public Health;
- Waiving administrative and budgetary requirements that impede delivery of essential city services;
- Suspending or modifying personnel rules and regulations to ensure employees have adequate resources and protections, including the reassignment of personnel from their ordinary duties to work deemed necessary for the emergency without regard to job classifications;
- Closing or restricting public access to municipal facilities;
- Authorizing any actions necessary to promote health and suppress disease, including quarantine;
- Impose greater restrictions for facilities, events or gatherings that house or draw persons who are at higher risk for severe illness;
- Canceling or suspending board and commission meetings or activities;
- Authorizing the use of all available resources to assist in the City's response to this situation;
- Delegating authority to department directors to permit the use of equipment under their control for supplying necessary food, clothing, medicines, shelter or transportation to people in need of assistance or to purchase supplies and materials or alter operations in a manner that the department head deems most helpful in relieving the emergency;
- Empowering the municipal court judge to suspend all dockets, trials and hearings and take any actions necessary to preserve functioning of the municipal court;
- Suspending all rules and regulations that may inhibit or prevent prompt response to this threat;
- Taking control of any means of supplies, transportation and facilities, including buildings;
- Taking all necessary steps to enforce any enacted regulations or orders of the City Manager or Director of Public Health.

As of this writing, the following powers HAVE been invoked by the city or other cancellations and delays announced:

RESTAURANTS, BARS, GYMS AND PUBLIC GATHERINGS

Section 1.02 Bars and nightclubs without food service. All bars, taverns, brew pubs, breweries, microbreweries, distilleries, wineries, tasting rooms, special licensees, clubs, and other places of public accommodation offering alcoholic beverages for on-premises consumption in the City of Columbia that do not prepare food for on-site consumption shall limit occupancy to fifty percent (50%) of the capacity otherwise allowed pursuant to fire or building codes up to a maximum of fifty people, including employees and staff located on premises.

Section 1.03 Restaurants and retail food facilities. All restaurants and retail food facilities that prepare food for on-site consumption in the City of Columbia shall limit dine-in food service occupancy to fifty percent of the capacity otherwise allowed pursuant to fire or building codes up to a maximum of fifty people, including employees and staff located on premises. In addition to on-site service to customers in compliance with these rules, restaurants and retail food facilities may continue to operate for purposes of preparing and offering food to customers via delivery service, to be picked up or for drive-thru. The City of Columbia shall not enforce any provision of an ordinance, permit, or other restriction that would, as applied to the specific circumstances, prohibit an existing restaurant or retail food facility from providing delivery service, window service, walk-up service, drive-through service, or drive-up service during the state of emergency declared by the City Manager on March 16, 2020.

Section 1.04 Entertainment venues. All movie theaters, live performance venues, bowling alleys and arcades and other entertainment venues shall limit occupancy to fifty percent (of the capacity otherwise allowed pursuant to fire or building codes up to a maximum of fifty people, including employees and staff located on premises.

Section 1.05 Gym and fitness facilities. All gyms and fitness centers shall limit occupancy to fifty percent of the capacity otherwise allowed pursuant to fire or building codes up to a maximum of fifty people, including employees and staff located on premises.

Section 1.06 Limitation on other public gatherings.

(a) All other intentional gatherings or gathering places not specifically referenced in this Article are limited to fifty people, including both public and private gatherings. This section does not apply to places of business not open to the public.

(b) All gatherings of High-Risk Individuals are limited to ten people.

(c) All concerts, conferences (greater than 50% venue capacity or 50 people, whichever is less.

d) and indoor sporting events are prohibited.

Section 1.07 Exemptions. The following are exempt from the restrictions in this Article:

(a) Cafeterias, commissaries, and restaurants located within hospitals, nursing homes, or similar facilities;

(b) Adult detention facilities and juvenile justice facilities, or similar facilities.

(c) Grocery stores and the Columbia Farmers Market at L76g W. Ash Street, except that dine-in facilities in a grocery store remain subject to the restrictions in this article and shall reduce allowed seating in the dine-in facility by fifty percent or limit seating to fifty patrons, whichever is less;

(d) Pharmacies;

(e) Foodbanks;

(f) Crisis shelters or similar institutions

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

Suspended all City Board and Commission meetings between March 18 to May 8. An exception to this Order was created for the Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Adjustment, and Building Codes Construction Commission. In light of the exception created for the Planning and Zoning Commission and in efforts to reduce unnecessary public contact, the scheduled work sessions for March 19 and April 9 have been **CANCELLED**. The Commission **will convene to hold their Regular Public Hearing Meetings** on March 19 and April 9 at 7 pm in the City Council Chambers.

Following the conclusion of the April 9 meeting, the Planning Commission will suspend all meeting activities until May 21, 2020. Given the fluid nature of the COVID-19 virus and the City's desire to protect its citizens and reduce potential spread, it is possible that the suspension of Planning Commission activities may be extended.

The public is still welcome to attend the March 19 and April 9 Planning Commission meetings to offer public comment where appropriate. To safeguard our Commissioners, staff, and other members of the public and to practice "social distancing" the Council Chambers have been setup such that attendees will be separated.

CITY FACILITIES

The city has closed The Arc, the Armory, the Columbia Fieldhouse and the Hillcrest Community Center and Moss Buildings for the time being. Other specific Parks and Recreation Department events have also been cancelled through, and including April 25 (at this time).

RENTALS

Suspension of interior inspections and moving back renewal deadlines. Site inspections must be scheduled one day in advance of the time the inspection is to occur. Tenant complaints will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

MUNICIPAL COURT

All City of Columbia Municipal Court hearings held March 17 through April 17 have been canceled. Everyone with a court date during this date range will receive a letter with a new court date. The court will continue to be open for other transactions including submission of community service and payments. If the public has any questions they can contact the court by email [at MunicipalCourt@CoMo.gov](mailto:atMunicipalCourt@CoMo.gov) or by phone at 573.817.5022.

BOONE COUNTY ASSESSOR

Due to COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus), effective immediately the Office of Boone County Assessor will not be conducting business on a face-to-face basis. Services will continue to be offered by phone, email or electronic interface using the Assessor's webpage at <https://www.showmeboone.com/assessor/>.

COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

General Classes

Classes have been suspended by the Columbia Public School District until at least Monday, April 13. During that time the district is implementing alternative methods of instruction. Elementary (PK-4) will have packets of work and regular communications from their teachers. Fifth graders and secondary students will be able to submit assignments to their teacher through Schoology. English Learners and students receiving special education services will be provided access to learning; or, in the event IEP goals cannot be met adequately through alternative methods of instruction, the district will provide compensatory services.

Nutrition

The school system will have options available to feed children in need during our closure. The district is currently finalizing plans with the USDA and working on distribution methods. More information will be available soon.

Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

At the moment of closing, all athletics and activities will be suspended.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

In-person classes will be suspended through the end of the spring 2020 semester. Existing online classes will continue as originally scheduled. The university has reduced campus operations, and faculty and staff are strongly encouraged to work remotely. **All employees should check with their supervisors who will identify those needed to fulfill duties that must be performed on-site.**

STEPHENS COLLEGE

- March 16- 17 - Classes are cancelled
- **March 18 - Stephens College begins all-online instruction**
- March 20 - All residence halls will close as of 5 p.m. for Spring break. Dining services in Stamper are open through dinner. Student access to labs, etc. will also be available until 5 p.m.
- March 23-17 - As always, there will be no instruction during spring break.
- March 30 – April 10 - Online-only instruction will continue.
- April 11 - Residence halls are scheduled to reopen at this time
- April 13 – In person classes are expected to continue.

COLUMBIA COLLEGE

Columbia College will be suspending all on-campus classes for students nationwide and transitioning to a virtual learning platform through the end of the Spring Semester, which concludes on April 25.

MOBERLY AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

MACC will suspend face-to-face instruction through the end of the Spring semester. Additionally, until at least April 13, MACC will implement remote working procedures for nearly all employees. Additional details on this will be forthcoming.

DANIEL BOONE REGIONAL LIBRARY

All Daniel Boone Regional Library facilities and services will be closed indefinitely beginning Tuesday, March 17 due to concerns for public and staff safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Patrons are encouraged to use the library's digital branch, www.dbri.org, where you can check out eBooks and audiobooks; stream music, TV shows and movies; and refer to other online resources for adults and children. During this period, due dates will be extended on physical items, holds will be suspended and the book drops will be unavailable. AARP Tax Aide sessions, passport services, bookmobile stops and book sales are suspended during this time, as well as other library programs and services.

The City of Columbia is maintaining a page dedicated to COVID-19 News on its website at the following link: <https://www.como.gov/coronavirus/>

(This document may not be reproduced, redistributed or significantly cited in other works without the written permission of the author.)