

Dear Saraland Neighbors,

I would like to provide an update of Saraland's response to the Covid-19 pandemic with some requests as to how you can help. During the past week, under Alabama State Health Department Orders, all restaurants and bars have been closed to dine-in customers with only drive-through, takeout, curbside service and home delivery allowed. Some local restaurants have totally closed while others are operating under these restrictions. Please continue to utilize Saraland businesses, especially, small businesses, with many offering phone and online options. Please also use appropriate social distancing as well as other CDC recommended precautions when visiting a business. Hoarding of some items such as bread, disinfectants and toilet paper has been an issue. I would ask that residents only purchase what you need and be considerate of your neighbors.

All Saraland public indoor facilities remain closed including the Saraland Recreation Center, Saraland Library, Saraland Civic Center and the Saraland Senior Center. City staff remain at the Senior Center providing both home delivery and pick-up of Meals-on-Wheels lunches to seniors and disabled utilizing the program. Bus service for seniors to physician and hospital appointments, as well as pharmacy visits remain available, with the buses being very frequently sanitized for this purpose. Saraland Municipal Court sessions remain suspended with court staff available by phone for rescheduling or other court-related matters. Saraland public safety including police, fire and paramedics are continuing their outstanding job of servicing our community. Saraland public works is also doing their part helping to maintain city services. If you encounter a Saraland city employee, please do thank them for their service. City Hall remains open, but we are requesting that anyone with municipal business call first and we will do our best to provide service without a personal visit being required. The Saraland Building Department is closed for routine visits, but is continuing operations, including inspections and environmental enforcement, with staff available by phone or email.

The upcoming Saraland Clean-up Day which was scheduled for Saturday, April 4th has been postponed after consultation with local health officials. The Saraland Census Fun Day also scheduled for that date has been canceled. Speaking of the 2020 U.S. Census, please do complete your census form promptly. Many residents have already received their census form in the mail. If you do not receive your census form by the end of this week, or have any other census related questions, please call toll free 1-844-330-2020 for further help and instructions. It is now especially important that our community get an accurate count for the census as expected federal recovery funding over the next few years will be directly tied to the reported numbers from each city and town.

I know that day cares and schools being closed has caused a major hardship for both our children and their parents. Please do remember that a major purpose of school being closed is to keep young people from physically playing and interacting with their peers. Please do restrict your children to your home and yard if possible. I encourage all group activities to be postponed or canceled, even if they are currently under the 25-person limit mandated by state order. This is especially important for children as they may not understand or comply with social distancing mandates. Saraland schools are doing an outstanding job of providing remote educational opportunities as well as ideas for safe physical activities for young people. Please take advantage of these for your children. Saraland parks remain open. However, use of the parks should only be by individual families with no other group play or interaction for our collective safety.

Access to Covid-19 testing has been a major problem for South Alabama. I have been working diligently with other local mayors, as well as our state and federal elected officials to obtain sufficient test materials as well as the PPE needed for safe testing. Our goal is to provide opportunities for testing of appropriate patients as soon as possible. Further updates will follow.

Lastly, I am making a personal plea for everyone to be especially civil and understanding with your neighbors. This crisis is provoking an unprecedented atmosphere of stress and panic nationwide. Saraland is a special community. Please do your best to remain positive and helpful with your fellow residents. I am totally confident that we will overcome this challenge working together with our friends and neighbors. Our city councilmembers and I are available for any assistance or support that we can provide.

Dr. Howard Rubenstein

Mayor, City of Saraland