

NO APRIL, 2020 COUNCIL MEETING

Fellow Citizens of Monticello and Jefferson County:

In light of the intensifying spread of the coronavirus (Covid-19) in North Florida and South Georgia, we, as a community, must focus on supporting one another and protecting the most vulnerable among us.

Our country has not faced anything like Covid-19 in over 100 years. With the exception of a very few people, none of us were alive in 1918, which was the last time the United States experienced a pandemic. Covid-19 has already killed thousands of Americans, and as of right now we have almost 200,000 cases in the United States. Covid-19 is spreading very rapidly. On March 1, 2020 Florida had only two reported Covid-19 cases, and on April 1, 2020, the number of cases in Florida had grown to almost 7,000.

People in Monticello and Jefferson County are going to contract the virus. Some of us, particularly the younger and healthier residents, may not even know they have it. Others, including those who are 65 and older and/or who have compromised immune systems (caused by diabetes, kidney disease, asthma, cancer treatment, and other conditions), are likely to get very sick and in some cases, may die.

We cannot stop Covid-19 from reaching Monticello/Jefferson County, but if we all act together we can limit its spread and by doing so help protect our families, friends, and neighbors from the worst of this disease.

While it is natural to feel a sense of helplessness as we fight this unseen enemy, there are actually many positive actions all of us personally can take:

1. Since the virus can be spread by people who show no symptoms themselves, stay home as much as possible.
2. When you have to leave your home, stay at least 6 feet away from anyone who does not live with you, including parents, grandparents, and grandchildren. This is because Covid-19 is spread in the air we breathe, especially by coughing and sneezing. This is going to be hard for all of us because in this part of the country we shake hands and hug. We hug our husbands and wives, we hug our children and grandchildren, we hug the folks we go to church with and other friends and neighbors. It is part of who we are. But, for the sake of all of us, until we have a vaccine for Covid-19, we are going to have to change how we do things.

3. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, going to the bathroom, and before eating and preparing food. If you don't have soap, use hand sanitizer. This is because the virus can live on surfaces where it lands for a few hours to several days.
4. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands or after touching surfaces.
5. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and then throw it away in the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cover your nose and mouth with your arm and sneeze into that. This will help prevent you from spreading the virus if you have been exposed.
6. If you are sick, stay home. If you have a fever, a cough, or shortness of breath, immediately contact your doctor's office by phone.
7. We can also help our community by calling home-bound neighbors to make sure they don't have any needs that aren't being met.
8. Support local businesses by calling in take-out orders or purchasing gift cards (by phone or on-line).

If all of us take the above actions [and others recommended by the Florida Department of Health and the U. S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)], we can slow the spread of Covid-19 here and help save the lives of our loved ones, friends and neighbors.

In this Easter season of renewal of faith and the celebration of hope, let us offer thanks for our community's many blessings and pray for peace and health for our families, our community, our nation, and the world.

May God bless all of us.

Mayor John Jones