

## Our Community in the Times of COVID 5-18-20

What follows is gross but is not a joke or fictional story. What do hypodermic needles, used condoms and human excrement have in common? Answer, our public restrooms and North City Park and Willow Bay Park. Gross in every sense of the word; yet, within being open one day, two of the above three degradations were found in North City Park after the month long closure. All three are routinely found over the course of a regular summer in both facilities. I don't get it, but I do have to address it.

Last week I wrote about knowing my limitations. This week I am forced to assert my authority and some common sense. I have no way of knowing if only one person was responsible for the fouling of the public facilities; but one incident in the era of COVID-19 has forced an action that I was hoping to avoid. The facilities at North City Park were to be cleaned and sterilized once a day. But, in light of these behaviors and the fact that COVID-19 lingers on hard surfaces for hours it is not prudent to leave them open. In a discussion with County officials last Friday I aired my concern about leaving them open. It was asked, "Why don't you just clean them more often?" Simple question, short answer, the City does not have the human resources or the budget to do it. When the restrooms are fouled as described it takes well over an hour to clean and disinfect them again, or in terms of money about \$30 to \$50 per cleaning per restroom. COVID-19 is expected to decrease City operating funds by as much as 20% for this fiscal year those cuts are already occurring in all departments, but non-critical services such as cleaning up after gross people will absorb a larger portion. Your water, waste water and garbage will not be affected by any of this as promised at the outset of COVID-19 and its associated protocols.

Negligence is defined as the failure to use reasonable care, resulting in damage or injury to another. This term is something that has weighed heavily on me since February in regard to COVID-19. I cannot as Mayor and perhaps more importantly as a citizen knowingly put others at risk. Public restrooms are a hard enough place to keep clean in the best of times and in terms of public health and safety these are certainly not the best of times. I cannot assure that these restrooms will be reasonably safe for public use; therefore, as of this Monday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, the public restrooms at North City Park will be locked and will remain so until such time as there is a vaccine or therapeutic treatment for COVID-19.

I apologize for what I know will be a problem for those of you with young children. The porta potties will also either be locked or removed; they are only cleaned once a week. The playground equipment will remain open and sanitized once a day. Sunshine and UV light also help with this process; but, do not rely on it in place of hand-sanitizer and other proper hygiene precautions for your kids. I also apologize for the delay in the installation of the new Lee Street Park playground, it was to be in place by now. However, COVID-19 shut the factory down that builds the equipment. We hope to have the new playground installed in June. I will let you know more as that information is made available.

Our partner and the concessionaire at Willow Bay, Cris Schultz, has agreed to keep the public restrooms clean and open at Willow Bay Park. He is providing the staff and the City is providing the supplies. These facilities will open May 30<sup>th</sup> and will remain open as long as

those using them don't desecrate them. I will however recommend that they be locked between the hours of 9:00 PM. and 7:00 AM.

Registration for T-ball and Pitching Machine baseball will open soon. Local practices and games can begin after June 13<sup>th</sup>, the beginning of Stage 4 of Rebound Idaho. I have had numerous requests about public and private events being possible; again, I would refer you to the Rebound Idaho document that can be found on the State of Idaho website or on the City's website. The initial protocol of social distancing and hygiene will remain in place through the summer even in stage 4. As you plan events please do so with those things in mind and remember that just because you can do something doesn't mean it's always the right thing to do.

As always I would ask that you continue to do your part and be cognizant of the needs and safety of others. This coming weekend is Memorial Day weekend. Please take at least a moment and reflect on the sacrifices made for you by so many. Comparatively, social distancing and a bit more personal hygiene are miniscule requests that will help ensure the safety and greater good of the whole.

Until next week...