



April 9, 2020

Dear Aspen Community,

We want you to know we are thinking of you every day and want to thank you for your actions that are helping us control the spread of COVID-19 in our community. We implore you to keep social distancing and doing the difficult work now that will help us flatten the curve of COVID-19 cases in Aspen. We are doing a good job of preventing the exponential spread of COVID-19 in our Valley. We took aggressive proactive measures early on to keep our community safe. Now, we must stay vigilant. There is still potential for a surge in cases this month due to continued transmission.

With all of your help continuing to social distance, including during outdoor activities we can halt the spread of this pernicious disease. So please, limit your outings to essential business, and no gatherings of any kind with more than five people.

We have now hit the more than two-week mark of following the stay-at-home order from Pitkin County and we know it's not easy. We want you to know that we are here to take your calls and questions and are working every day to put strategies in place for our individual, family, business, institutional, and community recovery.

We are looking at ways we can financially support our businesses and community members and today are holding a special meeting at 4 p.m., which you can join virtually. We will be allocating several million dollars in recovery funds to support businesses and individuals in our community during this time.

We are helping those in deed-restricted housing managed through the Aspen Pitkin County Housing Authority to accommodate the loss of employment or wages during this time. We have also waived the bag fee at local grocery stores to minimize the need to use your own. If you do bring your own reusable bag, please wash it after each use.

We have also sent strong letters to our congressional representatives in Washington, DC and our governor requesting that municipalities be included in the distribution of federal recovery funds. You can help our community recover by also sending letters to our representatives asking them to support recovery fund distribution to small counties and cities.

Within City Hall we have a dedicated team focused on putting together strategies to target the best way forward for our economic recovery. In addition, we are cutting back on our own organizational budget and looking very closely on how to reduce the City's own spending while delivering essential services.

Business activity in Aspen is one of the most important engines we have in our economy. We are each working hard with different sectors within the business community to gather feedback on your needs and future desires for Aspen.

It can be really hard at times like these to see all that we have going for us but now is the time to really look at our strengths, individually and collectively and see how we can harness them to create something stronger than we had before the pandemic. Let's focus on our strengths and resiliency as we come together as a community during this crisis. Together we can chart a course not just for recovery, but to create an even stronger economic and social future for Aspen.

Please remember, there is help available for those who are really feeling the pain. There are financial and mental health resources locally available and you can find all those resourced on the COVID-19 page of Pitkin County's website. We are all humans and feeling the breadth of emotions when the world has changed overnight is natural and expected. We are here to support you.

If you are interested in volunteering for COVID-19 relief efforts or helping a neighbor, there is a link on the City of Aspen homepage to connect you to organizations that can use your help. The Aspen Community Foundation is also taking donations through its COVID-19 Regional Response Fund. If you need financial assistance, please apply for help through Pitkin County. That link is on the Pitkin County COVID-19 page under "Financial Relief and Resources".

If you have questions about testing, the Pitkin County Incident Management Team just released an informational video on testing in our Valley. You can watch that on our website or Pitkin County's website.

Please know, we are truly in this together and together we will emerge stronger. So, stay safe, stay home, stay healthy, stay connected, and stay kind.

Sincerely,

Mayor Torre; Mayor Pro Tem Ward Hauenstein; Councilmembers Ann Mullins, Rachel Richards, and Skippy Mesirow

p.s. This photo was taken before social distancing but enhanced with Photoshop.

