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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of Goshen to take preventative measures ahead of potential COVID-19 outbreak

GOSHEN, Ind. (March 13, 2020)—Mayor Jeremy Stutsman announced Friday a series of measures the City of Goshen will be adopting in the coming weeks with the intent of slowing a possible outbreak of COVID-19 in the city.

Additional recommendations to the community are made in ongoing consultation with the Goshen Health, the Elkhart County Health Department, the Elkhart County Emergency Management Agency, Goshen Community Schools, Goshen College and the Goshen Chamber of Commerce.

City staff has been monitoring the situation and is aware of cases of COVID-19 being found in St. Joseph and Noble counties, both of which border with Elkhart County. Local health officials say they expect to confirm cases in Elkhart County soon.

In order to slow the potential spread of the virus, the City will:

- Cancel all municipal events that have more than 50 people
- Establish sanitizing procedures following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations for all City buildings and facilities
- Cancel all City meetings except for Board of Works, City Council, Parks & Recreation Board, Plan commission, Board of Zoning Appeals and Redevelopment Commission and others that are essential to comply with State statutes
- Suspend all work-related non-essential travel by City employees outside of the county
- Cancel all Parks & Recreation Department classes, programs and events
- Require staff to conduct business meetings remotely with individuals and organizations outside our county (excluding other government agencies)
- Work on opening livestreams to public meetings within the next few weeks
- Cancel the annual employee (and board and commission members) appreciation event

These measures will be implemented immediately and continue through the end of April, at which time they will be reviewed and updated as needed.

“Our focus needs to be on taking preemptive steps to reduce exposure and further spread,” Mayor Stutsman said. “We know there will be economic consequences to canceling and postponing events, but this is a time when the health and safety of our community must come first. It is also important that we separate preparedness and caution from panic.”

Social distancing practices call for events in which large groups of people gather in small, enclosed spaces, to be canceled. Both the CDC and the Indiana State Department of Health are asking individuals and organizations to practice social distancing at this time.

“The most important time to start preventative measures is before a significant number of cases are registered in our community,” Dr. Dan Nafziger, Chief Medical Officer at Goshen Hospital, said. “Historic data on previous pandemics and epidemics show that preventative measures slow the virus’s spread, reducing the strain on our hospitals and medical teams.”

Though the City does not have the authority to ban events, Mayor Stutsman strongly recommends all nonessential gatherings be limited to 50 people. On Thursday, Gov. Eric Holcomb issued a series of directives, including that of limiting gatherings to no more than 250 people.

Mayor Stutsman recommended also that meeting organizers consider employing remote technology to conduct business. If gatherings are held, meeting organizers should implement preventative measures as recommended by the CDC. “We understand news of the outbreak and subsequent cancellations have already produced changes in daily life, but public participation and cooperation will be important in attempts to slow the spread in our community,” Mayor Stutsman said.

In addition to practicing social distancing, the City asks the community to continue staying informed on the latest pandemic instructions and information from reputable social media and news sources. The City will continue updating its webpage, goshenindiana.org/covid-19-information, with local, state and national resources.

“If you think you have contracted COVID-19, please contact the Elkhart County Health Department **and** your primary physician before you plan on going to a hospital or clinic,” Mayor Stutsman said. “This will allow the facilities to prepare the testing and for your arrival.”

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