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OFFICE OF
COMMUNICATIONS

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Statement from Mayor Tecklenburg on City's Coronavirus Response

Charleston, S.C.—At a press conference today, Mayor John Tecklenburg made the following statement on the city's efforts related to COVID-19:

Since the threat of the coronavirus first became clear in China and later in Europe, the city of Charleston has taken a number of steps to prepare and to help keep our employees and citizens safe – our #1 priority.

A significant part of that effort has been closing down public facilities, including the City Market, Dock Street Theatre, Old Slave Mart Museum and more, postponing public meetings and limiting public gatherings in accordance with recommendations from our medical community and the CDC.

In order to further reduce the risk of coronavirus transmission, we suspended all instructor-led Recreation Department programs and classes, including youth and adult sports, and closed the doors to our senior centers. Additionally, we suspended all city permitted tours until further notice.

Charleston City Council has begun holding daily emergency meetings by telephone to receive updates from Emergency Management on the city's efforts to mitigate impacts and to ensure continued city operations in a safe environment.

I want to assure everyone that our Police and Fire Departments will continue to operate as normal, with enhanced safety protocols, in order to preserve public safety.

And, now, effective at 5 p.m. today, the city will close all remaining offices and indoor recreation facilities to the public. We will continue to provide services to citizens while taking every possible precaution with regard to public health and safety.

For many of our employees, as we continue to strongly urge everyone to practice social distancing, this next step will necessitate a transition to working from home.

Some departments for which telecommuting is less feasible, such as Livability and Tourism, Parks, Public Service, and others, will divide crews into teams that will alternate workweeks, so as to reduce contact with other city staff and the public.

Beginning on Monday, for the duration of the week, bulk trash/debris collection will be suspended citywide, in order to make additional crews available to assist with garbage collection. This suspension applies to the city of Charleston as a whole, including areas serviced by contractors (Daniel Island, Cainhoy, Outer West Ashley and Johns Island).

Citizens are asked to remove any existing curbside yard debris and bulk/miscellaneous items and to refrain from placing these materials at the curb until collection resumes. So, green cans will be picked up next week, not bulk debris.

To ensure that essential city functions remain in operation during this unprecedented time, some employees may even be temporarily reassigned to positions and departments other than their own.

From an economic standpoint, our number one concern right now is for all our citizens who are suddenly losing their jobs and fighting to save their businesses as a result of this crisis.

To assist those who are feeling the economic effects most, the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce has created a new online hub (dew.sc.gov/covid-hub) where workers whose employment was affected by COVID-19 can go to have their questions answered, learn about ways they can help their employees, or find information on unemployment benefits.

Additionally, the city is currently working with the Small Business Administration and City Council to make low-interest disaster loans available to help small businesses overcome this temporary loss of revenue and survive this extraordinarily difficult time. These loans may be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that can't be paid because of the disaster's impact.

Applicants can apply online, receive additional disaster assistance information and download applications at disasterloan.sba.gov. Applicants may also call SBA's Customer Service Center at (800) 659-2955 or email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov for more information on available SBA disaster assistance. The deadline to apply is Dec. 21, 2020.

There's no question that these are challenging times for us here in Charleston and for those around the world. As we continue working with our local partners to slow the spread of this virus and keep our community safe and healthy, what we need most are two things that, fortunately, our citizens have in abundance here in Charleston: common sense and the desire to be a good neighbor.

And with that in mind, I'd like to make three requests of our citizens today:

- 1. Stay home and limit trips to only those that are essential in order to reduce the spread of this virus.*
- 2. If you develop the symptoms – cough and fever – self-quarantine immediately and go to MUSC's telehealth website (musccare.com) to register and get in their system for testing.*
- 3. Under the heading of being a good neighbor, please, don't hoard groceries and other household supplies. There is plenty to go around, as long as we buy only what we need and continue to look out for one another.*

As always, the health and safety of the citizens of Charleston remains our number one priority. I ask that you all continue to be smart and do your part to help flatten the curve by

staying home and helping to spread that message on social media by using the hashtag #FlattenTheCurveSC.

And finally, I must take a moment to commend the remarkable men and women in our community – the many healthcare workers, grocery store employees, cops, firefighters, and more – who continue going to work every day to protect our citizens and help our city through these unprecedented times. We owe you a great debt of gratitude and truly couldn't do this without you. Thank you.

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