



HUNTSVILLE

The Star of Alabama

COVID-19 Update – News Conference
March 16, 2020, 12 p.m., Public Services Building

Mayor Tommy Battle Remarks

We are fortunate to have one of the best health care systems in the country here in Huntsville. As a city, we will be doing everything we can to support our health care partners as we navigate the course of this virus.

This afternoon at 2 p.m., Mayor Finley and I will be asking our City Councils to enact a State of Emergency.

This is a standard emergency procedure. All this means is that our Councils will be transferring to administration powers of personnel and purchasing.

This gives us the ability to act swiftly, as needed. It helps us cut through the red tape on decisions where we need Council approval – a process that can take five weeks or more. I'm grateful for the trust Council Members have in us to responsibly use this strategy.

Some of you have asked why we need a municipal State of Emergency when the State has already declared one and the answer is that we are two separate forms of government. We still need Council's approval. One of the checks and balances – good to have.

This is not a normal time, but we're going to stay as close to normal as we can.

As a city, we are going to stay open – sanitation will be picking up your garbage and yard waste, police will be patrolling, we're running public transit as normally as possible. City Hall remains open – but we encourage you to do business with us online or on the phone whenever possible.

We're operating on emergency health protocols – including sanitize and separate – throughout our departments.

Yesterday, the CDC amended its group gathering guidelines, advising the public not to have groups of 50 or more congregate.

With this recommendation, our recreation centers have cancelled group activities and games, but they're remaining open with some limitations for the present.

We've got a team in City Hall working with the school system on arrangements to provide meals for students who depend upon school lunches and take-home backpacks.

We have a lot of elderly in the community who may need additional assistance securing food and supplies –our administration is working to address this need with our non-profit partners but I have a personal request to this community.

We all know someone who might need some extra help. If every citizen would check in on their neighbor and help provide them with their needs, it will make a difference.

Retail and restaurants going to be hit hard. Our team is also working on ideas on how to help them. You'll be hearing more about plans to pick-up food and go... and that's a good direction.

Everyone is going to get tired of home cooking and you'll enjoy getting take out to go. Mrs. Battle and I love each other but after a close weekend, and a messy kitchen, we're ready for someone else to cook.

This is a swiftly changing landscape and we want to be prepared to react in the best interest in the health and safety of this community. This team – along with Madison County Commission Chair Dale Strong, who could not join us today – is working together every day. we're in constant communication. We pledge to keep you informed of rapidly changing developments.

We recognize there is anxiety – some have tried to corner the market on thermometers, toilet paper, and paper towels. Everyone needs to calm down, there will be toilet paper available later...

Let's all remember the strong and collaborative community we are.

We don't hoard supplies and we keep our wits about us because at the end of the day, we're all in this together, and I'm incredibly proud to be your Mayor.

Let's stay focused, follow CDC guidelines for hand-washing and social distancing, help our neighbors, and we'll get through this together.

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