

MEMO:

To: Mayor Hibbard, Bill Horne and City Council members

From: COVID-19 Task Force of the CNC

Re: How has the city planned for safety of residents in the Post Covid-19 Recovery Process? (See the letter and the table below.)

The COVID-19 virus is a highly contagious, potentially life threatening pandemic that is not fully understood by scientists and medical professionals at this time. For example, we do not know with any degree of certainty who is infected and a carrier of the disease (no test with any impressive degree of certainty exists yet); whether recovery from the disease creates immunity; and all the ways in which the disease can be transmitted.

The disease has already had a catastrophic impact on our community, with implications for individuals, health, nonprofit and city sponsored programs, and local businesses. To deal with this emergency, cities, counties and states have enacted a variety of measures, some requiring mandatory, temporary closures of businesses and services. At individual levels, voluntary compliance has been incorporated into emergency plans.

We believe that a viable plan for recovery needs to be holistic, i.e., including consideration for the health and safety of residents and the organizations that serve them, as well as businesses. It is our belief that reopenings should be phased, gradual and in compliance with the recommendations of the CDC. The concern is that a second wave could soon occur if people falsely believe that things are safe. This would only delay the final reopening of businesses, not to mention the effects that death and illness will have on our community. We depend upon and support local businesses, but the safety of residents needs to be carefully weighed as well.

The purpose of this citizens' committee has been to survey residents to determine what needs to be done to effect a successful, safe recovery. We ask the city and the county to review the attached list of recovery issues and to consider these concerns in their planning. We also ask you to please consider the need for public confidence in our leaders as those who are responsible for our safety. Additionally, we welcome ideas as to how neighborhoods can assist in this recovery process, and we are actively working on this in our own next phase of planning.

Attached is an email detailing our concerns and recommendations we have for dealing with them. We appreciate your attention to these issues. Thank you for your consideration.

Attachment: Recommendations for the City's meeting with Pinellas County Commissioners.

Background: It is accepted that recovery from the closures associated with COVID-19 needs to occur as soon as possible. It is also accepted that hasty recovery, and/or an ill planned recovery is likely to result in a resurgence of the virus and setbacks on restrictions and business openings. AMPLIFY, as representatives of the business community, has been called upon to create a plan for business reopenings. It is assumed that input will be used by the Clearwater City Council to develop its recovery plan.

The Clearwater Neighborhood Coalition (CNC), the only citizens' organization of its type in this community, was asked by its president to assist the Council in planning for residents' health and safety during recovery period. Toward this end, a committee was formed, open to CNC members and others. The committee held three, lengthy, online meetings via Zoom. Committee members, including CNC members and others, were instructed to obtain input from their neighbors and other acquaintances. The table below represents the results of this effort.

A List of Recovery Concerns Pertaining to the Health and Safety of Clearwater Residents

	Category	Problem description	Solutions to be considered:	Coordinate with: (examples)
1.	Voluntary compliance practices for disease control	Long-term awareness and preventive measures (without resorting to fines or penalties) will need to be sustained throughout both emergency and recovery periods.	Ensure transparency and frequent communication of facts for achieving public compliance and necessary funding. Provide frequent public reminders to wear masks, practice distancing, etc., distributed through a variety of formats including signage, advertising, newsletters, postcards, utility bills, electronic message boards, etc.; publicize on county and city websites; appoint a COVID-19 Czar.	County and City; Current CDC recommendations; Medical professionals, all media networks, including electronic
2.	Employment assistance and employee safety practices	There is no indication as to when or which jobs will be reopened. Many families will not be able to afford their basic needs; Infected, workers may be forced by economics to return to work too early, possibly reigniting high infection rates; high stress may result in a variety of social problems.	City and County officials need to work with the Florida governor and legislators to eliminate problems filing claims and processing unemployment payments; provide job search facilities, including online, located in libraries and public buildings (include part time and temporary jobs in these listings); support the development of job training and apprenticeship programs. Achieve cooperation with employers to develop and enforce "COVID-19 healthy workplace" programs and policies to be enforced by employers	County, Governor and legislators; state employment offices, health departments, adult education programs
3	Health, medical	This disease can go undetected permitting individuals to infect others. Testing, while currently inadequate, should be a prerequisite for recovery.	Provide testing centers to be locally available, well-publicized, and open before and after work hours; work with the state to identify and purchase dependable tests that can be quickly analyzed and reported; use drive-up test sites wherever possible.	State of Florida and County healthcare providers including Baycare, etc.

			Develop COVID-19 safety standards specific to restaurants, hotels, tourist attractions, etc. Examples include provisions for placement of tables, social distancing, signage that applies to people with a fever or disease symptoms, etc. ; hire additional health inspectors to ensure compliance with these standards; provide incentives for business to comply (They may be given a safety certificate to be displayed in their place of business and on their web pages.)	
4	Reopening of the beach and tourist businesses	As a world class venue, beach visitors can bring infection to residents.	Delay reopening until the disease has shown significant downward trend sustained for 14 days, as per CDC guidelines; create plans and regulations for beach visitors that focus on the avoidance of disease transmission; plan reopening to be phased and gradual, rather than total; define and enforce policies for restaurants, hotels and tourist related businesses for reducing the incidence of COVID- 19 transmission.(See # 3)	City, County, CNC, Clearwater Beach neighborhood HOAs, merchant associations
5	Counseling	Mental health problems, including depression, anxiety and domestic issues, have increased	Ensure that hotlines and agencies are adequately staffed and publicized; provide specialized counseling resources to support healthcare professionals, police and first responders; recruit assistance from volunteer therapists. (NYC did this.); publicize where people can get help.	2-1-1, Suicide Prevention Hotline, The Haven, police and first responders, mental health counselors as volunteers
6	Children	<p>Closed schools may leave children without care and supervision as parents return to work.</p> <p>Daycare for infants and programs for older children can be too expensive for many parents.</p> <p>Recreation programs will be essential for older children.</p>	Provide additional funding for programs and create partnerships with businesses to subsidize the cost of these programs; hire additional health inspectors and social service personnel during this period.	Juvenile Welfare Board; Pinellas County Schools; YMCA, healthcare and Mental health organizations that treat children; police departments; City recreation departments. Employers
7	Elderly, disabled	Many elderly live alone. Elderly are the most vulnerable population.	Continue to monitor nursing homes and rehab centers; encourage these institutions to provide electronic	Area Agency on Aging; Senior Services, Hospice;

			audio/video communication between patients and families, encourage train volunteers to do “welfare checks” on people living alone (similar to the “Neighborhood Watch” program.)	volunteer groups and neighborhood organizations, media
8	Minority and other special needs groups	<p>Low income, homeless, and racial minorities have been particularly vulnerable to COVID-19</p> <p>Communication difficulties may prevent some groups from knowing safe practices and recognizing early symptoms</p>	Provide COVID-19 information in a variety of formats, languages and venues to connect with ethnic and disabled populations; distribute to neighborhood venues; print information in Spanish and braille; make information easily available online.	Community centers, churches and service centers for people with disabilities.
9	Census	If interpersonal contact is not practical and safe for collecting census data, the result can be under reporting and loss of federal funding.	Encourage people to complete the census online and provide computer access at libraries and other venues to computers dedicated to census collection.	Libraries and other public venues
10	Voting	<p>Some people may fail to vote due to fear of infection.</p> <p>Long lines will result in people leaving without voting.</p>	Provide additional voting sites to avoid long lines; publicize the option to vote by mail or to vote early; hire additional staff to clean voting machines between users	League of Women Voters, Supervisor of Elections