

A Message from Mayor Peter Simmons

I know this is a very difficult time for all of us, and I wanted to take this opportunity to send some updated important information to each of you.

Please see below for a listing of resources available to residents that may need assistance, as a result of circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 virus. Some of this information has been shared before and we will continue to share information that is new or valuable in an effort to help you through this extraordinary time we are in.

Employment Resources

If you have been impacted by efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the state of Florida, you can file your Reemployment Assistance Claim through CONNECT, Florida's online Reemployment Assistance System at <https://connect.myflorida.com/> . If you are unable to file online, you can call 1-800-681-8102. Your claim can be filed by phone Monday through Friday 7:30 AM to 6:30 PM EST, and Saturday and Sunday 8 AM to 2 PM.

United Way COVID-19 Community Economic Relief Fund can help you find assistance for bills, rent and food. Call 866-211-9966 for the list of local agencies that can help you or go to <http://www.211.org/services/covid19>.

Employment Assistance – Express Employment Professionals is available to help individuals find jobs and also to help businesses find new team members. You can reach them at 239-498-5000, or email Leslie.Hohmann@ExpressPros.com.

Restaurant Employee Relief Fund- created to help restaurant industry employees experiencing hardship in the wake of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak. Through this Fund, grants will be made to restaurant industry employees who have demonstrated being financially impacted by COVID-19, whether through a decrease in wages or loss of employment. These grants will be made on a first-come first-served basis, subject to availability of funds. [Click here for more information.](#)

Business Resources

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity has a Short Time Compensation program available to help small businesses continue to pay workers even with reduced work hours. Application information is available at [here](#), and the DEO's Help Center is [here](#) for any questions you have.

The Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program is now open for small business owners that are experiencing economic damage as a result of COVID-19. It's a short-term, interest-free working capital loan that can help your business "bridge the gap" before a return to normal business or before a longer-term financial loan is acquired. [Learn more here.](#)

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) provides low-interest disaster loans to help businesses and homeowners recover from declared disasters. Businesses can apply for loans online through a 3-step loan process [here](#).

SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans – Substantial economic injury means the business is unable to meet its obligations and to pay its ordinary and necessary operating expenses. These loans provide the necessary working capital to help small businesses survive until normal operations resume. The SBA can provide up to \$2 million to help meet financial obligations and operating expenses that could have been met had the disaster not occurred. More information [here](#).

The Corona Virus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (Cares Act) is a paycheck protection loan program designed to provide relief to small businesses so they can retain workers and maintain payroll and other debt obligations. This loan program is implemented and processed by consumer and commercial lenders. You may apply through your bank, credit union or other approved financial institutions. Contact your banker for more information.

County Resources

Two months ahead of schedule, the 216 bed expansion at Gulf Coast Medical Center will officially open this Thursday, April 2nd. The hospital will have 250 dedicated beds to treat COVID-19 patients and persons under investigation (PUIs) in cohort units to keep them separated from non-COVID patients.

This opening also offers 18 additional negative pressure isolation rooms and up to 36 overflow ICU beds to treat COVID-19.

IF YOU FEEL SICK: The Florida Department of Health has opened a 24-hour COVID-19 Call Center at 1-866-779-6121. Questions may also be emailed to covid-19@flhealth.gov. Email responses will be sent during call center hours.

Residents can find a dedicated City of Bonita Springs webpage with the most recent information regarding COVID-19 at this link: [COVID-19 Resource Dashboard](#).

Here you will find helpful documents about COVID-19 and what to do if you suspect you have been exposed. You will also find City of Bonita Springs Advisories informing you what steps the City is taking, with the safety and health of our community as the first consideration, as they are released. Social media feeds for the Centers for Disease Control and Lee Department of Health are also available on this page. There are resources to help us understand symptoms and self-screening as well as where to go for testing.

Stay safe everyone...TOGETHER...we will get through this difficult time. God Bless.

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