



Office of the Mayor

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Synopsis of COVID-19 protocols in the City of Athens

The City of Athens continues to coordinate with Limestone County EMA and the Limestone County Commission regarding the local Pandemic Standard Operating Guide. Based on information received from the local task force, the City of Athens has implemented several COVID-19 protocols in order to limit exposure risks for the public and employees.

March 31 – Mayor writes letters re: stimulus to Shelby, Jones and Brooks

As suggested by the Alabama League of Municipalities, Mayor Marks sent letters to Senators Shelby and Jones and Rep. Brooks encouraging them to support COVID-19 stimulus funding for cities like Athens to help with recovery, lost revenue, and expenses.

March 31 – Athens Utilities extends suspension of disconnects

Athens Utilities is extending its suspension of utility disconnects for non-payment through April 17. Will re-evaluate status at that time.

March 25 – Mayor part of League of Municipalities phone conference with state officials

The National League encourages us to write our U.S. Senators and Congressmen to send recovery funding for cities directly to those cities. Dr. Harris gives overview; Limestone cases up to 6.

March 24 – Mayor addresses citizens via video

Gives overview of protocols; encourages citizens to maintain social distancing, sanitizing, etc.

March 23 – Council passes ordinance giving Mayor executive powers

The Athens City Council's ordinance allows Mayor Marks to make decisions in the best interest of the City in regards to the COVID-19 pandemic while Alabama and Athens are under a state of emergency.

March 23 – Council live streams its meeting

The Athens City Council to adhere to social distancing offered live streaming and a call-in number so citizens could participate without having to attend.

March 23 – Businessman offers electronic billboard for City announcements

A local businessman who has a billboard on U.S. 72 has offered free time for the City to make announcements related to COVID-19. He said those should start appearing today.

March 20 – Mayor Marks addresses citizens via video

In an effort to help reassure the community, Mayor Marks via video addressed citizens about protocols, coordination, and supporting local businesses.

March 20 – City suspends permission for door-to-door sales

The City of Athens has implemented several COVID-19 protocols in order to limit exposure risks for public health. As part of these protocols, the City of Athens will cease permission for door-to-door sales until further notice.

March 19 – City decides to close its facilities to the public effective March 20; offers remote access

City of Athens offices are adhering to the Alabama Dept. of Public Health's COVID-19 protocols stressing social distancing by closing its facilities to the public effective March 20.

Athens Mayor Ronnie Marks will continue to coordinate with Limestone EMA on the need to amend these protocols.

“This is not an easy decision to make, but it is necessary in order to limit exposure for our employees and citizens during this ever-evolving pandemic,” Marks said. “We must continue to work together as a community to follow safety protocols, call and check on our neighbors, and pray for guidance.”

Employees will be working, and each department is offering ways for citizens to remotely access employees, information, and forms.

The City’s website is www.athensal.us which lists contact information for each department as well as information on payments, forms, and services.

Each city building will have a note on the door listing contact information for that department. The Athens Police Department will utilize a speaker and camera at the front entrance to determine whether to grant a person access to its building.

March 19 – Athens offers ZBA media through live stream option

Tonight's Zoning Board of Adjustments meeting (March 19) will be available by live stream. The meeting will start at approximately 5 p.m. This will allow citizens to practice social distancing and view the meeting remotely.

The link will be online at:

<https://www.athensalabama.us/265/Zoning-Board-of-Adjustments>

In addition, due to COVID-19 protocols, those who meet certain criteria are prohibited from attending in person.

March 18 – Athens Utilities to close Customer Accounts lobby; suspend disconnects

Athens Utilities is supporting state health officials on recommendations for social distancing as part of its COVID-19 protocols and ensuring the health and wellbeing of employees and customers by closing to the public its Customer Accounts lobby on Jefferson Street.

This will become effective Thursday, March 19, at noon.

In addition, Athens Mayor Ronnie Marks and Customer Accounts Manager Bill Vaughn have suspended the normal practice of disconnecting utility services for nonpayment. This is effective immediately and will continue through April 6. Customers will be responsible for the full bill amount accrued until payment is made.

Customers are urged to pay what they can on their bills between now and April 6 to help keep their balances low. Athens Utilities will re-evaluate the COVID-19 situation on April 6 to determine whether to extend this modified policy.

March 17 – Met with local EMA Task Force

Discussed needs and objectives. PPE is biggest need for Athens Fire and Athens Police.

March 17 – Employees who deal with money told to wear gloves

Mayor Marks issued gloves to Customer Accounts, Clerk’s Office and Athens Police since they deal with money on a regular basis. He instructed department heads to have employees who handle money to wear gloves.

March 17 – Downtown merchants allowed to mark a parking spot for curbside pickup

Mayor Marks gave Athens Main Street permission to work with downtown merchants on allocating a few parking spots temporarily for curbside pickup.

March 16 - Athens Fire limits public contact

Athens Fire and Rescue Chief Bryan Thornton has suspended field trip visits to stations or by firefighters to sites; suspending car seat installations; and is limiting access to fire stations on an as needed basis only. Stations are taking extra precautions related to daily activities and making additional sanitation efforts.

March 16 - Mayor signs Proclamation of Existence of A Local Emergency City of Athens

Mayor Ronnie Marks signed the proclamation on March 16, 2020, at the request of Limestone County EMA Director Rita White. If federal funds become available, this will allow the City to request reimbursement for COVID-19 related expenses.

March 16 - Athens Planning Commission's March 17 meeting to have remote access

The regularly scheduled Athens Planning Commission meeting for Tuesday, March 17, will be held at Athens City Hall. The work session is at 5 p.m. and the regular meeting at 5:45 p.m.

On March 15, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended avoiding large gatherings since this can contribute to the spread of COVID-19 in the United States. As part of the City's efforts with its COVID-19 protocols aimed to limit exposure, the Planning Commission meeting will be live streamed. The link will be on the City's homepage at www.athensal.us under "Athens News." Athens Mayor Ronnie Marks encourages citizens to utilize this option if possible.

Here are options for remote public input:

- During the meeting, Public Works Director James Rich will provide a phone number citizens can use to call in with comments or questions about an agenda item.
- Citizens can email Rich ahead of time with questions about agenda items that he can answer during the meeting. Send those to: jrich@athensal.us

March 16 - Athens-Limestone Recycling Center changes

The Athens-Limestone Recycling Center is a not-for-profit service supported in part by the City of Athens and Limestone County. The center utilizes inmates from the State of Alabama to operate the facility, but due to state protocols related to COVID-19, inmates are not available. As of 2 p.m. on Friday, March 20, no recycling will be accepted at the center until further notice. The office will not accept visitors. The center is not accepting electronics at this time. City of Athens curb side customers can bring their recycling to the center until Friday at 2 p.m., but customers must sort their items. Customers who do not want to sort can put their items in the trash. Anyone dumping their recyclables unsorted this week or dropping off recyclables after 2 p.m. on Friday will be prosecuted. Cameras are on site.

March 14 - City facilities remain open (except for Recreation Center/Senior Center) but caution urged

City facilities except for the Recreation Center and Senior Center remain open for their regular business hours. However, those who have a fever or have not been fever free for 48 hours, those who have been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 and those who have traveled in countries with a Level 3 Travel Health Notice are asked to contact City departments by phone or email. These are available on our website address at www.athensal.us.

March 14 - Athens Senior Center closed to the public

The Limestone County Commission has canceled senior citizen activities at senior centers throughout the county. The City of Athens has closed the Athens Senior Center to the public until at least April 3.

March 14 - City of Athens curb side recycling suspended

Due to State of Alabama protocols regarding COVID-19, the City's recycling vendor in Decatur cannot get inmates, which the vendor relies on to help operate the facility. Curb side recycling is suspended until further notice. If you can store your recycling in your bins or additional containers, we will update citizens as soon as service can continue.

March 13 - City of Athens Municipal Court closed and Defensive Driving Course suspended

Due to the recent Supreme Court Order, all in court proceedings with Athens Municipal Court have been suspended through April 16, 2020. Judge Don Mansell has elected to cancel the Defensive Driving Course scheduled during this time. All cases have been rescheduled as follows:

COURT/DDC DATE	RESCHEDULED DATE
March 16, 2020 Defensive Driving School	May 18, 2020 6 – 10pm
March 19, 2020 Trials 9am and/or 1pm	May 21, 2020
*time of trial will remain the same as previously set	

March 26, 2020

April 23, 2020 9am

April 2, 2020

April 30, 2020 9am

April 9, 2020

May 7, 2020 9am

April 16, 2020 Trials 9am and/or 1pm

June 18, 2020

*time of trial will remain the same as previously set

If your address has changed since arrest or issuance of your citation or if you have any questions, please contact the Court Clerk's Office with your current information at 256-233-8733 or by email to court@athensal.us.

March 13 - Athens Police dispatch asking callers additional questions

Callers who contact Athens Police Department requesting an officer come to their home or business will be asked additional questions, such as, "Do you have a fever or have you recently had a fever?" "Have you been outside the United States?" "Do you have flu-like symptoms?" This is so our officers can limit exposure risk.

March 13 - City of Athens organized recreational activities suspended

All organized recreational activities at the City of Athens are suspended until at least March 20, and the Recreation Center is closed to public use.

March 13 - Athens Utilities promotes services available remotely

Athens Utilities web address: www.athens-utilities.com

Phone: 256-232-8750

E-mail us customeraccounts@athens-utilities.com

We offer:

- Pay by Phone
- Drive-thru
- Night Deposit
- Online

From the website, customers can:

- Request new service
- Find the form to complete for bank draft
- Request a service disconnection
- Make payments (vendor fee applies)

March 13 – Media briefing with EMA and other officials

Gave latest info and agreed to the Limestone County Pandemic Standard Operating Guide

Stay up to date by following:

- City of Athens, Alabama (Public Relations) on Facebook
- City's website at www.athensal.us and look for the COVID-19 update tab on the homepage
- Sign up for Nixle alerts at <https://local.nixle.com/register/> and follow "City of Athens Utilities"