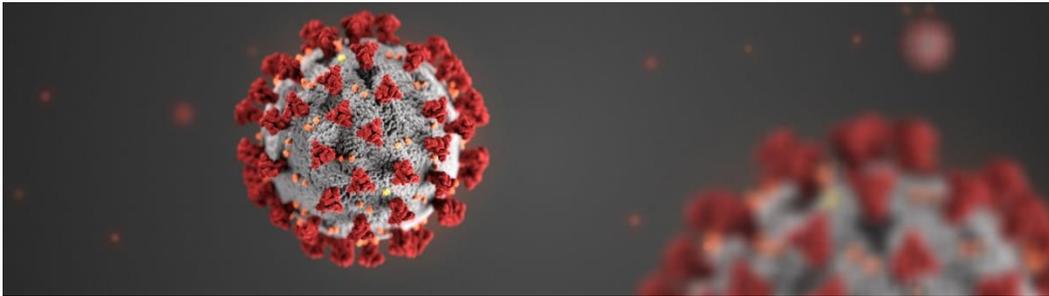


Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): What it Means for Your Community



On March 14, 2020, the Governor of Georgia declared a state of emergency due to the infectious spread of COVID-19, otherwise known as the coronavirus disease. The number of cases in the greater Atlanta area is increasing each day and schools, courthouses and restaurants continue to close their doors. In response, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is encouraging social distancing and recommending that organizers cancel or postpone in-person events to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Below is a quick Q&A to address many concerns communities now face during this pandemic.

As of 4:00 P.M. on March 16, 2020, the White House advised people not to gather in groups of more than 10, with such guidelines in effect for a period of 15 days – a notable escalation from the CDC’s recommendation.

Should we and can we cancel or postpone our upcoming annual meeting or board meeting – and what alternatives do we have to an in-person meeting?

Yes, we recommend that all upcoming in-person annual meetings and board meetings should be postponed and/or canceled. The CDC recently issued guidance to cancel or postpone meetings and in-person events consisting of 50 or more people for the next 8 weeks as of March 15, 2020. Generally, there are several methods by which Boards and associations can conduct business without holding an in-person meeting, such as written consents, electronic voting, voting outside of a meeting, and even video conferencing. If you are not sure what applies to your association, reach out to us – we are here and available to assist during the coming days and weeks.

Should we and can we close our amenities like the clubhouse, gym or the pool and cancel reservations for upcoming events?

Yes, we recommend that associations should close amenities and cancel upcoming reservations. Doing so may help reduce the potential spread of the virus in your association and may help your association use its resources and personnel in more essential common areas of the association. If your association decides to keep the amenities open or wishes to allow reservations, we recommend that your association take extra steps to sanitize/disinfect those amenity areas and consider limiting the total number of individuals that can use the amenities at one time. Additional sanitization measures may also be warranted.

Does my association have to clean association-owned property to prevent the spread of the coronavirus?

Yes, we recommend that associations take on additional cleaning and disinfecting as part of their general maintenance responsibilities during this outbreak. While exact maintenance obligations may vary depending on your association's specific governing documents, associations generally have the obligation to maintain association-owned property, which may include taking extra steps to keep association-owned property clean, such as wiping down/disinfecting offices, pedestrian gate systems, etc., and routinely cleaning/disinfecting commonly touched surfaces throughout the day including door knobs, handrails, and elevator buttons, installing hand sanitizer stations, or hiring additional cleaning personnel to perform additional sanitization and cleaning of heavy traffic areas.

Should we issue community-wide statement about the virus?

Yes, we recommend associations stay proactive, issue community-wide precautionary statements, and keep residents informed of association updates as they become available. If your association wishes to issue a formal statement to the association about certain coronavirus precautions, your association may consider mirroring some of what the CDC has stated concerning good health and safety practices to help limit the spread of the virus. Some examples include encouraging residents and owners to:

- *Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.*
- *Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.*
- *Avoid close contact with people who are sick.*
- *Stay at home when you are sick, have flu-like symptoms such as cough or shortness of breath, or if you have a fever.*
- *Cough or sneeze into your elbow or use a tissue and then throw the tissue in the trash.*
- *Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.*

Likewise, associations may consider encouraging persons that have traveled to areas the CDC has designated as "high-risk" recently, including China, Iran, Italy, and South Korea to self-quarantine for a period of 14 days and exercise social distancing.

Over the next few weeks and months, communities will likely encounter more cases of the coronavirus and be tasked with responding to members questions and concerns. In these uncertain times, it is important to remember that everyone is in this crisis together. If reasonable steps and precautions are taken, then associations can remain calm as this crisis unfolds. Community associations should consult with their professional partners on how to handle these issues within their specific communities.