



Georgetown County Government

NEWS RELEASE – COVID-19 #8

May 16, 2020

Contact:

Jackie Broach, MPIO

Phone: (843) 545-3164

E-mail: jbroach@gtcounty.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Georgetown County will reopen offices on May 18, however the public is asked to call or email before they visit

GEORGETOWN COUNTY, S.C. – Georgetown County staff who have been teleworking since March will head back to the office on Monday. It's the first phase of reopening for county facilities, however access for the public to county offices and facilities will be limited.

COVID-19 continues to be a threat and a serious worry for many staff members, some of whom are in the high risk category for complications from the virus. As employees return to work, county leadership wants to keep them safe with social distancing and in-house policy changes, but also by limiting the number of people moving through facilities.

Since county buildings closed to the public on March 18, county staff has been able to handle nearly all public business via e-mail, phone and dropboxes. Business that couldn't be handled virtually has been handled by having residents come in on an appointment-only basis. That system has worked well, and the county will continue to utilize it during this first phase of reopening.

"For the time being, we are going to continue to ask residents to call or email before they come to a county facility," said County Administrator Angela Christian. "In most cases, our staff can assist them virtually and save them a trip – which most residents



Staff from Facilities Services installed plastic sheeting and barriers in offices with open floor plans to provide protection for workers.

have really appreciated, not only because they are also trying to limit exposure to others in this time, but just for the convenience of it.”

For residents who can't be assisted virtually, an appointment will be scheduled to come into the department they have business with. Admittance to county facilities will be by appointment only until further notice. Those entering will be strongly encouraged to wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth. The exception to the appointment-only rule will be residents coming into designated facilities for public meetings. The county will resume in-person public meetings on May 26 when County Council meets at Howard Auditorium.

For residents who do need to come into facilities, the county has made some important changes for increased safety of both the public and staff. Those include:

- The main entrance to the historic courthouse has temporarily been moved from Screven Street to Prince Street. The public will now enter directly in front of the Treasurer's Office, where the entryway is wider than at the front of the building and allows more space for distancing. This offers increased safety for the public, as well as the Sheriff's deputies who provide security at the entrance. The staff parking area directly in front of the Prince Street entrance has been turned into a public wheelchair-accessible parking area.
- Plastic barriers have been installed on counters and desks where the public and staff typically have face-to-face contact. Additional barriers have been installed between employees working in the same room.
- County staff manning public access desks will be required to wear masks when dealing with the public. Staff will be provided reusable cloth masks they can wear.
- Members of the public will be strongly encouraged to wear appropriate facial coverings when in county facilities.
- Enhanced cleaning and sanitation policies have been implemented in all county departments.

For more information, residents may visit gtcounty.org or call 843-545-3063.

Department-specific information pertaining to reopening is listed below and will be posted on department webpages.

Auditor's Office: All personal interaction with taxpayers will be based on previously scheduled appointments. Homestead appointments will commence on May 20 and extend at a rate of three per day until Sept. 25. All appointments for other purposes must be made at least 24 hours in advance. Appointments will be scheduled in 15-minute intervals, with a maximum of three taxpayers permitted in the office at any one time. In the event there is a back-up, floor tape has been applied in six-foot increments in the hallway. Accommodations will be made to assist taxpayers who need to deal with other departments to complete their paperwork.

Building Department: All permit forms are available on the [department webpage](#). Credit card payments may be made by calling (843) 545-3116. Checks may be mailed to P.O. Drawer 421270, Georgetown, SC, 29442. For assistance, or if you are unable to access our permits online, please contact the Building Department at (843) 545-3116.

County Council: Georgetown County Council will resume in-person meetings on May 26. Council's regularly scheduled meeting for that date begins at 5:30 p.m. The location has been moved from Council Chambers to Howard Auditorium (1610 Hawkins St., Georgetown) to allow for proper social distancing. This will be the location for County Council meetings until further notice. Members of the public choosing to attend council meetings are strongly encouraged to wear masks that cover the nose and mouth for the safety of other attendees, as well as county staff and council.

Courts: Trials continue to be suspended. Non-jury hearings for Family Court, DSS Child Support negotiations, DSS and Clerk's contempt of court hearings, juvenile hearings, worker's compensation hearings, Master-in-Equity hearings, Probate Court hearings, Common Pleas Court mediations and arbitration hearings, and depositions will resume May 18.

Human Resources: All applications for employment should be sent via [email](#) or regular mail, or placed in the dropbox in the lobby at the old courthouse.

Libraries: On May 18, Georgetown County library branches will begin offering curbside, contactless delivery of library materials. Library users may order books online or via phone. Users will be notified by library staff when their order is ready, and the order may be picked up during operating hours (10 a.m. to 6 p.m. for Georgetown and Waccamaw branches, and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for Andrews and Carvers Bay branches). Library staff will carry the order out to the patron's vehicle and place it in the trunk. Admittance to the library is not allowed at this time, but services and entry will be phased in gradually in coming weeks. Visit the [library webpage](#) for more information.

Parks and Recreation: Per guidance from state and national organizations, recreational facilities will remain closed to the public until **June 1**. The Georgetown County Farmers Market, conducted in partnership with the Waccamaw Market Cooperative, will reopen **May 23** and take place every Saturday through October from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Screven St., across from the historic county courthouse. All public beach accesses, boat landings, boardwalks and piers have been reopened. Virtual programming continues and is available at gtcparks.org. Look for facility reopening and program information in the coming weeks.

Planning and Zoning: All permit forms are available on the department [webpage](#). Credit card payments may be made by calling (843) 545-3158. Checks may be mailed to P.O. Drawer 421270, Georgetown, SC, 29442. For assistance, or if you are unable to access our permits online, please contact the Planning Department at (843) 545-3158.

Register of Deeds: Those who need to have documents recorded are asked to use the dropbox in the lobby of the historic courthouse. Documents presented in person must be presented at the window at the office entrance. The Register of Deeds office will continue to operate on the appointment system that went into effect on March 18. Paralegals will be admitted to the Record Room by appointment only, with entry limited to three people at a time. Appointments will be in 4-hour increments: 8:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. and 12:45-5 p.m. To make an appointment, call (843) 545-3088. Those receiving appointments must remain at their assigned work station during their appointed time. Documents may be left in the dropbox at the courthouse entrance. All documents should be in a marked envelope with clear directions for

where and who it should be directed. Items dropped off without a paralegal's name on them will be recorded upon receipt.

Treasurer's Office: A station has been set up for customers to put payments in envelopes and place them in a secure dropbox in lieu of waiting in line and having face-to-face interaction with a cashier. Receipts may be retrieved online or mailed upon request.

Veterans Affairs: Due to the small size of the lobby, visitors are asked to wait outside if the lobby is already occupied in order to maintain proper social distancing.

###