

Summary of Conference Call with Governor Reeves

May 4th at 4pm

Reeves started off by announcing his Executive Order 1478 which revises his Safer at Home Order to allow more business openings across the state, as well as increase the amount of people allowed in a gathering from 10 to 20 for outdoor activities. Indoor activities are still restricted to 10 or fewer. This new order goes into effect Thursday morning at 8am.

Governor Reeves stated that his office has been successful in getting Dept. of Treasury Secretary Mnuchin to provide additional guidance where Reeves is allowed to provide Coronavirus relief funding to municipalities on discretionary basis for payroll costs for public health and public safety employees unless the chief executive of the relevant government determines otherwise.

Good news, this guidance allows Governor to send money to municipalities to pay for expenses related to COVID-19 as it relates to law enforcement officers, especially police and fire if it can be verified that it is related to COVID-19. This could cover unbudgeted expenses such as new hires and overtime payments.

Bad news, the bill that the state legislature passed on Friday precludes the Governor from being able to provide money to municipalities.

Restaurants are currently allowed to open dining areas at 50% capacity using social distance guidelines, including spacing tables six feet apart. Groups with 6 or fewer guests are not required to space out among the party, but they are suggested to do so. Bars that do not offer food services shall remain closed. Food service locations that do have bars need to place chairs six feet apart.

Gyms are most likely the next group to be re-opening. Hoping to announce further guidance this week to take effect one week from today with significant guidelines on sanitation procedures.

The Gaming Commission is looking at adjusted operation guidelines for casinos in hopes of opening by the end of the month.

New number of COVID-19 cases is a statistic that the State looks at but doesn't heavily focus on because there is large variation. Rather, the State will look at date of onset, not the reported date of testing. The State is looking very closely at specific areas and specific counties that might need to have revised guidelines due to specific number of cases on a local basis.

- Will cities that have high cases and cases still climbing have the discretion to reopen as they see fit or at least with strict guidelines?

Yes.

- I live in hunting country and am asked repeatedly if the shooting ranges can open since they are not in close contact with each other anyway?

This will be treated like an outdoor activity, no more than 20 people should be participating at once.

- Is there any consideration to assisting municipalities/counties with funding for public safety personnel during COVID-19?

See Governor Reeves' introductory statements summarized at the top.

- If the governor loosens the reins on dining establishments and bars, will bands/music be allowed?

Music is not permitted at this time. Legal staff will review to provide further guidance.

- Will any of the CARES Act money be able to be used by very small towns like Blue Springs whose ONLY business has been severely impacted by the pandemic?

We are still trying to lobby the Federal Government to adjust the rules of the CARES Act in order for it to be used to assist smaller municipalities.

- Some mayors are requiring masks to be worn when out in the public. Do you have any guidance?

The State is encouraging people to wear masks, but only requiring servers at restaurants to wear masks.

- We have barbers who are threatening to open tomorrow, no matter what! Any direction? They say they will take citations if necessary.

In the White House re-opening plan, barber shops are not allowed to reopen in Phase 1 or Phase 2 due to the close proximity of service. Governor Reeves is continuously searching for safe ways to get these businesses open as soon as possible.

- We have a couple of the smaller churches in the city that are wanting to have service, and I just don't see any way unless we allow all churches to. Could you provide guidance?

Churches haven't closed, but we are not encouraging them to open at this time.

- We need more clarity on churches or places of worship. We have some pastors who have been doing parking lot services but want to get back to in-person services in a responsible way. I would really appreciate a direct answer.

Churches haven't closed, but we are not encouraging them to open at this time.

- Is the 7:00pm time limit for city parks that will allow baseball/softball practice? If so, why 7:00?

At this time, youth leagues are suggested to practice but not hold games. Parents in bleachers become a problem. For the next 10 days, it is recommended to allow youth teams to practice, but no large groups should gather at ball parks. Tournaments should be withheld for now.

- The City of Pearl depends greatly on inmate labor to address all of the physical job duties that are required throughout our city. Do you have a time frame on when you think we will have the ability to regain their assistance? Their absence directly effects our overtime budget due to having more of our personnel working to complete job tasks.

The Governor has not signed an Order stopping inmate labor. He suggested for Mayor Windham to contact Governor Reeves directly to discuss this point.

- The City of Ocean Springs has many restaurants/bars that generally offer live music and entertainment. EO 1478 specifically states that bars (that do not sell food) cannot have live music. See Section I(a)(xii). Does this prohibition also extend to restaurant/bars (that obviously do sell food)? We would appreciate some clarification.

Music is not permitted at this time. Legal staff will review to provide further guidance.