

**EMERGENCY DECLARATION AND ORDINANCE**

**A DECLARATION BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HIAWASSEE, GEORGIA OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY ARISING BECAUSE OF COVID-19; AN ORDINANCE TAKING IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY MEASURES**

**WHEREAS**, the President of the United States declared a National Public Health Emergency on March 13, 2020; and

**WHEREAS**, the Governor of the State of Georgia declared a State Public Health Emergency on March 14, 2020 and urged “local officials to do what’s in the best interests of their communities to keep people safe and stop the spread of coronavirus” on March 19, 2020; and

**WHEREAS**, the World Health Organization has declared Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) a world health emergency and a pandemic; and

**WHEREAS**, the number of confirmed cases and deaths from COVID-19 is escalating rapidly, internationally, nationally, and locally; and

**WHEREAS**, based upon the experience of other local governments in Georgia, a growing number of other cases are likely to occur; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 16, 2020, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the President of the United States stated that any gathering of over 10 people should be discontinued or prohibited; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 23, 2020, Governor Kemp announced that “certain individuals with an increased risk of complications from COVID-19 to isolate, quarantine, or shelter in place,” covering those who “live in long-term care facilities, have chronic lung disease, are undergoing cancer treatment, have a positive COVID-19 test, are suspected to have COVID-19 because of their symptoms or exposure, or have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19”, and that the Department of Public Health would institute rules and regulations to implement such measures; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 23, 2020, Governor Kemp additionally announced measures to “close all bars and nightclubs and ...ban all gatherings of ten or more people” unless they can assure spacing for at least six (6) feet apart between people at all times beginning at noon on March 24, 2020 and lasting until noon on April 6, 2020; and

**WHEREAS**, public health experts, including those at the CDC and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), have advised that individuals infected with COVID-19 are contagious

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even while experiencing minor or no symptoms and implored leaders to take immediate action to prevent further community spread of COVID-19; and

**WHEREAS**, preventing and slowing community spread of COVID-19 provides health systems additional time to obtain personal protective equipment necessary to protect health care workers and medical equipment necessary to treat COVID-19, and is therefore vital to the health of the nation; and

**WHEREAS**, in the judgment of the City Council of the City of Hiawassee, Georgia, there exist emergency circumstances located within its jurisdiction requiring extraordinary and immediate response for the protection of the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the community, the state, and the nation; and

**WHEREAS**, it is essential for the City Council to act immediately in order to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and to prevent or minimize sickness, injury, or death, to people and damage to property resulting from this public health crisis; and

**WHEREAS**, O.C.G.A. § 38-3-28 provides the political subdivisions of this state with the authority to make, amend, and rescind such orders, rules, and regulations as may be necessary for emergency management purposes to supplement rules and regulations promulgated by the Governor during a State of Emergency; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States Supreme Court has previously held that “[u]pon the principle of self-defense, of paramount necessity, a community has the right to protect itself against an epidemic of disease which threatens the safety of its members”; and

**WHEREAS**, there are currently no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Towns County or the Cities therein, including the City of Hiawassee; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 1.13(10) of the Charter of the City of Hiawassee provides the city with the authority to take actions deemed necessary to deal with such an emergency for the protection of the safety, health, and well-being of the citizens of the city; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 2.24 of the Charter of the City of Hiawassee authorizes the City Council by emergency ordinance to take actions deemed necessary to deal with such an emergency for the protection of the safety, health, and well-being of the citizens of the city.

**NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY DECLARED** that a local state of emergency exists within the City of Hiawassee, Georgia and shall continue until the conditions requiring this Declaration are abated.

**THEREFORE, THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HIAWASSEE HEREBY DECLARES AND ORDERS AS FOLLOWS:**

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**Section 1.**

**Findings of Fact.** For purposes of describing the circumstances which warrant the adoption of an emergency declaration, the City Council hereby adopts and makes the findings included in the “WHEREAS” clauses as findings of fact.

**Section 2.**

**Declaration of Public Health State of Emergency.** The City Council hereby declares a public health state of emergency within the City of Hiawassee because of the proliferation of COVID-19 in the United States and the State of Georgia, which will remain in force and effect for thirty (30) days from the date hereof.

**Section 3.**

**Public Gatherings on City Property.** For the duration of the declared emergency, there shall be no public gatherings on any property owned or controlled by the City. To avoid confusion, the following definitions shall apply under this Section: a “public gathering” shall mean the organized gathering or assembly of ten (10) or more persons at a specific location; “property owned or controlled by the City” shall include any park, public square, public space, playground, recreational area, or similar place of public gathering, but nothing herein shall prohibit individuals or families from using sidewalks or designated pedestrian areas of parks for walking or other exercise if they are not participating in an organized gathering. The City Council and all other boards, commissions or agencies of the City, shall have authority to conduct meetings and take votes by teleconference in accordance with O.C.G.A. Section 50-14-1(g). The Mayor shall have authority to cancel any regularly scheduled meeting of the Council or of any board, commission or agency of the City during this emergency.

**Section 4.**

**Utility Services.** For the duration of the declared emergency, the City will not disconnect any public utility service provided by the City on account of non-payment. After the conclusion of the declared emergency, persons will have a period of forty-five (45) days to make such payments before service may be disconnected.

**Section 5.**

**Classification of City Services.** For the duration of the declared emergency, the Mayor shall be vested with the following discretion and authority, to wit:

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- (a) To categorize City services as either “required” or “discretionary,” and to periodically review and modify such categories.
- (b) To assign specific employees to required or discretionary services, and to periodically review and modify such assignments.
- (c) To use her discretion to permit employees to telework.
- (c) To temporarily suspend the provision of discretionary services and to direct employees who provide discretionary services not to report to work until such time as the service suspension is lifted or until such time as the Mayor redirects the employee to other services.
- (d) To contract for and expend non-budgeted sums and services, as may in her discretion be required to meet the demands upon government and services of the City for the duration of the declared emergency, including therein authority to spend such sums from the reserves of the City. Any such non-budgeted expenditures shall be reported to the governing authority of the City.
- (e) To maintain, to the best of the ability of the resources of the City, the provision of essential services, which shall include, but not be limited to, public safety, public works, healthcare, and building permits.

**Section 6.**

**Tolling of Deadlines.** Any deadlines for the purchasing or obtaining by persons or businesses of occupation tax certificates, permits or similar civil approvals mandated by the City Code shall be tolled for the duration of the emergency as established herein, and for 15 days thereafter. Such persons or businesses shall obtain necessary permissions required by law but deadlines set by the City Code are tolled for the duration of the emergency as established herein, and for 15 days thereafter.

**Section 7.**

**Eating Establishments.** Restaurants and other eating and dining establishments where food is served must cease offering dine-in services but may continue preparing and offering food to customers via delivery, drive-through or take-out services. Patrons, employees and contractors of the establishments must maintain at least six (6) feet of personal distance between themselves and others. If a restaurant is licensed to sell beer and wine for on-premises consumption, such restaurant, during the effective dates of this ordinance only, shall be authorized to sell unopened bottles or cans of beer or wine for take-out consumption off-premises;

**Section 8.**

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**Closure of Certain Businesses.** Gyms, fitness centers, pools, social clubs, amusement facilities, bowling alleys, pool halls, theaters, massage parlors, nail salons, and any other similar facility, any facility used for an activity that involves prolonged physical proximity of individuals, and any facility used for entertainment, social, grooming, or general health and wellbeing purposes, must close and remain closed for the duration of this emergency.

The City of Hiawassee is closing to all tourists and leisure visitors. Effective immediately, no lodging establishment shall accept reservations until further notice, including extensions to current reservations. Effective Tuesday, March 31, 2020 at 11:59 p.m., all hotels, short term (as defined as less than 28 days) vacation rentals, and other transient rentals to include marinas, RV parks, campgrounds, Airbnb, VRBO, rental cabins, rental homes and time shares shall cease renting to tourists for 30 days. This ban shall not apply to rentals to transitory military personnel, first responders, health care workers, construction workers actively engaged in projects in the County, City employees and contractors engaged in essential City services and others engaged in formal business in the City of Hiawassee.

**Section 9.**

**Personal Distance.** All other establishments not covered in Sections 7 or 8 of this ordinance such as grocery stores, pharmacies, and other businesses which remain open during the emergency must post signage on entrance doors informing consumers to maintain at least six (6) feet of personal distance between themselves and others and shall not allow more than ten (10) people into such establishment at any one time if such social distancing cannot be maintained.

**Section 10.**

**Gatherings.** All public and private gatherings of more than ten (10) people occurring outside of a household or living unit are prohibited. Nothing in this ordinance, however, prohibits the gathering of individuals for the purposes of carrying on business certified as "essential" by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-58 or designated by the Governor as "critical infrastructure" or the provision of medical or health services.

**Section 11.**

**Emergency Interim Successor to Manager/Administrator.** The City Council desires to make certain that the chain of authority within city management is clear. If the Mayor is unable to perform her duties, then the individual designated by the Mayor as the emergency interim successor pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-50 shall assume the duties of

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the Mayor. Should the emergency interim successor be unable to perform those duties the Mayor Pro Tem, or other such person appointed by the Mayor, shall assume those duties.

**Section 12.**

**Curfew.** No curfew is imposed at this time, but the Mayor is authorized to impose a curfew if the public fails to otherwise comply with this ordinance, or it becomes necessary to more fully address the declared emergency. The Mayor may impose a curfew up to the duration of the time remaining before expiration of this ordinance.

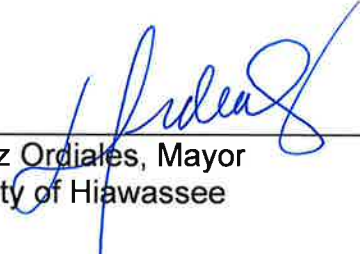
**Section 13.**

**Procurement.** The City Council hereby suspends any bid and competitive portions of the City Code and policies and authorize the Mayor to utilize emergency purchasing authority. The Mayor shall continue to seek the best prices during the state of emergency.

**Section 14.**

All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with the provisions of this Declaration are hereby suspended during the effective dates of this Declaration (or any extension thereof) and the terms and provisions of this Declaration shall prevail.

SO ADOPTED and ORDERED this 30<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020.

  
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Liz Ordiales, Mayor  
City of Hiawassee

Attest:   
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Bonnie Kendrick, City Clerk



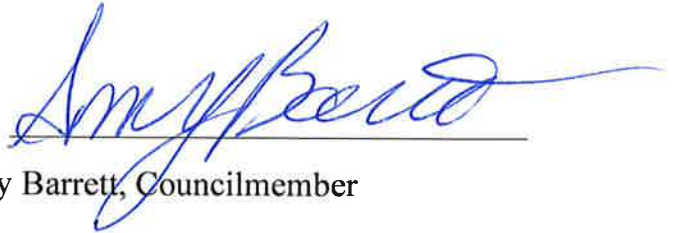
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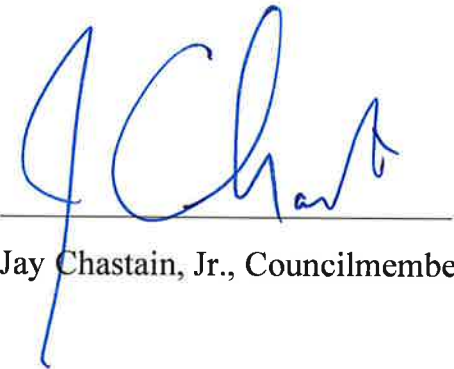
Approved this 30<sup>th</sup> day of March 2020.



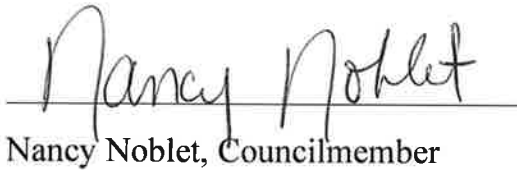
Anne Mitchell, Councilmember



Amy Barrett, Councilmember



Jay Chastain, Jr., Councilmember



Nancy Noblet, Councilmember

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Patsy Owens, Councilmember