

March 25, 2020 Executive Director's Report:

First of all, I want to thank all of the staff who have had to deal with an ever changing and highly stressful situation. We have worked hard to balance our own personal safety with the need to help our clients during this national disaster. It does not matter what anyone's personal feelings about the virus are, it is undisputedly a huge disruption.

As of right now our transit service is down considerably and transit office staff are staggering shifts to have as few people in the office as possible. Although our call volume is way down, there are other projects that need worked on that this is an opportunity to get caught up on. Public transit is considered an essential service, so we will continue to provide it unless told not to do so or we have no available staff to complete the work.

Similarly, planning staff has a large backlog of work to do that can, in the main, be done from home. A great deal of effort has gone into making sure that staff can do that properly. Amongst all of this it is also important to note and not overlook the fact that Alexis has taken on the higher role of Community Development Director, and that we have hired another planner because of the flood grant. Her name is Leslie Wright, her move here from Alabama is perhaps on hold, however, owing to the current situation.

Housing is continuing because our homeowners and contractors still need the work done on their homes. Until we are ordered to stop or if a homeowner or contractor requests it, we will continue these services. If housing work in the field does shut down, we do have a backlog of work for a significant period of time. Housing staff is working from home or staggering shifts in the office to cut down on the number of people in the office at any one time.

If we receive a shelter in place order or there is confirmed case in Cass County, we will shut the office and staff will exclusively work from home, but for perhaps one person in transit and staff will be able to singly come in to get documents or things of that nature. If a staff member should become ill with a confirmed case, then even that level of in person office work will cease for at least a week to make sure that no other staff are ill.

April 1st is my 7th anniversary as director and I've been at SWIPCO since 2006 except for a bit of a gap in 2012. As I talk with other COG directors around the state I'm incredibly grateful for the people of this organization, its board, and for the way we have set ourselves up to handle this crisis. Do not get me wrong, it is a crisis, but for some of our sister agencies there is a real threat that they may close or need significant outside assistance or loans to continue operations. That is not the situation that we are facing right now. We will be wounded, but will recover and I think it is an opportunity for us to demonstrate to our region that we are here for them and will be for the long haul.