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SHELTER-IN-PLACE TRANSCRIPT, 3/31/20, MAYOR STAN BOOKER

Good Afternoon my fellow Lawtonians,

These are the times that try men's souls.

That line from Thomas Paine's article "Crisis" in 1776 sure seems like it was written for today.

Fourteen days ago I declared a civil emergency in the wake of this COVID-19 crisis in our country.

In that short time, we have gone from limiting restaurants to adding close contact businesses and then we had to go to essential only. And now, I will be issuing a "SHELTER IN PLACE" order.

Over the past 2 weeks, we have taken a society that has worked pretty well, but this virus has already changed the way we live and work.

There is no clear precedence in a free society for what we are doing.

There is no operating manual for us to refer to.

Every mayor is on their own to figure out what will work. There is little guidance from states and federal governments about specific community issues.

There is an enemy out there that we cannot see, and many are ignoring the warnings.

We have asked everyone to stay at home except for essentials and we have been aggressive in closing businesses that we deem non-essential. At the same time we have all the schools out, the kids at home, many parents that are off with so many businesses closed.

As I alluded to, we have impacted society greatly.

All with the goal of limiting human movement so that the virus would not spread.

But, with so many people off, and the weather so nice, it drove everyone outside to "go."

I have received calls from the Refugee manager concerning all the people going there, and they are on overload. They have closed restrooms because they could not keep them sanitized. They have also closed Camp Doris to campers.

I visit with Medicine Park Mayor Ellis daily and they are having problems with too many people showing up and the town is shuttered. They are having a meeting at 4 pm to discuss shelter in place and may have to close their parks to try to discourage people from coming, due to the inability to police social distancing.

It is a lesson that in a free society you can't make everyone stay home.

As I said, we have turned everything upside down and there is no guide book.

Every action we take, puts people somewhere else. When we close something, we have potentially created a problem somewhere else.

Every Shelter in Place order encourages exercise. But it is health, not shopping.

SHELTER AT HOME is necessary to end this crisis.

My attempts to limit shopping by being more aggressive than the Governor on closing stores actually had the opposite effect of driving more people to a limited number of stores. I studied this all weekend and I watch so many people go to the stores and it made social distancing near impossible. I could not believe that people would walk into such a crowded environment ignoring the warnings, and I was totally flabbergasted that there were people taking their families into that danger.

I have spoken often of unintended consequences of our decisions in the past. And, I believe that part of the crowding was an unintended consequence of my decision to close some of the businesses more aggressively than the Governor's order, and the consequence was that it put everyone in the fewer buildings. That defeated the purpose and the goal.

Was there a lack of personal responsibility on an individuals part, yes, but my order did not help and added to the problem.

As we navigate forward, I will be prepared to make corrections when I find that my decisions have not had the desired effect.

Along those lines, turning society upside down in an effort to save lives is causing a serious mental health concern. The stresses of the situation, certainly are causing issues that we cannot ignore. Mental health issues. And the result of that cannot be good.

As we navigate forward my decisions will take this into account. I am adding a behavioral psychologist to medical advisors to help me understand the impact that these decisions will have going forward.

Now, back to the crowded stores. We have to take some additional measures, and I am working to address this with a 3 prong approach.

1. I am implementing an individual essential shopping policy when possible. It does not take two people or the entire family to shop. This will help with the crowd at the stores, and may actually be the biggest contributor to making social distancing easier.

Wal Mart has already implemented a "One Cart One Shopper" policy. Everyone else stay home. Wal Mart is not for social gathering!

2. I am going to allow appliance/furniture stores to open back up under new strict guidelines so that some of the people will go there and ease the crowd at the big box stores. I will also allow sporting goods stores to reopen as closing them also added to the crowd at the big box stores. Closing them did not keep people from buying, they just went to big box stores and bought it there. In retrospect, we would have been better off with them open.

I have made this decision after consults with health officials who agree that it is just better to spread people out.

3. I am cutting the permitted occupancy of businesses that are open and further information and details will follow. The stores will be required to monitor by whatever means necessary how many people are in the store. For instance, as ONE exits, ONE will be allowed to go in.

I will be monitoring to see if these measures bring the desired result, and if not, I will prepare other measures to do so.

Those are the things that are being put in place to control crowd size.

Now, my consultations with health officials continue to bring me back to

sanitation and social distancing. Daily when I talk to them I get schooled on this. It is impossible to keep 6' between the customer and the cashier. So, to protect this group of unsung heroes of this crisis, I will require any retail business to install sneeze guards to protect the cashier, as well as the customer. This will apply to any business where there is an exchange point such as, but not limited to banks.

Additional sanitation measures will include that all employees must sanitize their hands between each and every customer.

Where there are self-service registers, I will require sanitary wipes available so that the customer can wipe down before use.

Refillable food and drink containers will be forbidden during this time.

Additional signage will be required and businesses are required to go online at lawtonok.gov and read the order and they will find downloadable signage there.

One of these signs will be to warn customers using gas pumps that there is a COVID-19 spread risk and they should wear gloves or sanitize before and after using the pump. This will also apply to ATMs, car washes, and all places where self serve facilities place a COVID 19 spread risk.

I am reducing the social group size to 6 in an effort to slow the spread. Using verbiage from Cameron University, "tighten your circle of contacts." Everyone should be thinking about what they germs are bringing into their house by the people they are socializing with.

I am implementing a curfew from 10 pm to 5 am on all citizens. Only essential workers with their essential worker letter will be allowed on the street, except for an emergency.

All measures in this order will have a penalty to include fines, including holding parents responsible with fines, and, revocation of occupancy permits if necessary.

This is the most aggressive SHELTER IN PLACE ORDER in the state that I am aware of, with the adding of several important sanitization and social spacing requirements on businesses to protect employee, and customers alike. We want to be the example of reaching the goal of flattening the curve to save lives.

This is not going to be over as soon as we hoped and we cannot let up too early, but rest assured, everyone wants to get back to normal as soon as we can. I am

extending the civil emergency order to the end of April and will continue to monitor. The models that I have heard about say that Oklahoma will peak in 17 days, so be prepared.

Our golf courses have implemented strict "no touch" rules with sanitization. You can find the rules online. I have a call into the Governor to see if we are going to be able to allow that, and hopefully, if the golfers will be diligent we will be able to leave this in place. It is better to have them spread out over 100 acres than in crowds somewhere else.

Also, our tennis courts remain open to singles tennis. After consulting with health advisors these Non-contact sports are good for mental and physical health. We will just have to see where this goes. You are encouraged to exercise and maintain your physical health. And don't forget this will help your mental health. Just being outdoors helps your mental health.

But, don't make this a vacation. It is not a vacation.

I know that this is a conflicting message but you have to understand that you are to be home, except for essentials and exercising. This could get more limited if we can't as a community show more personal responsibility.

But, we will be monitoring this and continue to seek guidance from medical professionals.

Remember yours, and other's 6' social space.

Remember to sanitize your hands.

Remember DON'T touch your face.

Remember to not listen to rumors on Facebook. You can get the facts at lawtonok.gov. We are working on the order and it will be signed and posted when completed.

And remember to laugh. I highly recommend that you watch I Love Lucy reruns every day, in order to keep laughing.

And remember to pray. Pray for our health care workers, and the cashiers, and so many more that are keeping our society going at these difficult times. So, many need prayer now. So many need someone to talk to now. Think of others.

And remember, Stay Calm, Stay Positive, and STAY HOME!

I Remain confident in our future together.

God Bless