

Hamtramck Mayor Karen Majewski's Remarks from Sunday March 22, 2020

Hello. As-salaam 'alaykum. Dzień dobry. Dobar dan. Dobriy den. Mirëdita. Namaskar.

Thank you for tuning in. I know you've all got questions and concerns about COVID-19 here in Hamtramck. As mayor of this great city, I'm here to give you some information about this crisis and what your city administration is doing to keep you as safe as possible and keep the city running; to tell you about some of the resources that are out there to help you; to give a shout out to some grass roots efforts you and your neighbors have been organizing; and to let you know some ways you can help.

A text version of these remarks will be posted on the City of Hamtramck Facebook page and website shortly after we are done here. That text will contain active links and phone numbers, so you do not have to urgently scribble that information down.

As you know, City Hall has been closed all week, and will continue to be closed until further notice. Despite that, like many of you, many of our staff have been working remotely and keeping their normal work schedule, so don't hesitate to reach out by phone or email if you have an issue. You can always reach the City Manager Kathy Angerer at 313-800-5208 and kangerer@hamtramckcity.com. She stands ready along with our department heads to answer your questions and address your concerns as quickly as possible. As always, in an emergency, dial 911. A lot of you have had the same questions, so I'll answer a few of them here. But remember that as this emergency continues, our strategies may have to change, so it's still best to check with our very competent staff for day-to-day concerns.

Many of you have been asking about your water and tax bills. The state and federal tax deadlines have been pushed to July, and our city income tax deadline will also move to that new deadline. For those of you seeking a refund, submit as soon you can and those refunds will be processed.

During this crisis, in the interest of public safety and your well being, we are joining with our neighboring municipalities in suspending water shutoffs so you continue to have access to clean water. Of course we know you're concerned about not falling behind on your payments, so although city hall is closed, you can still pay your water and tax bills in several ways 24 hours a day—through the city website, through the divdat app, and at the kiosks in the city hall vestibule, at Krown Grocery, and at Walter's Party Store and at DivDat kiosks throughout metro Detroit.

<https://hamtramck.us/>

You've also been asking about other city services. Garbage pickup is continuing as normal. If your garbage hasn't been picked up on time, please contact Priority Waste, just as before. Most building permits and inspections are on hold because we want to limit person-to-person exposure, but emergencies are still being addressed. Please call 586-228-1200 if you have an urgent situation

Some of you have also asked about evictions and other court matters. These issues are under the jurisdiction of the 31st District Court, and most non-criminal cases have been adjourned until after May 1st. For more detailed information, please call the court directly or see their website.

<http://www.31stdistrictcourt.net/>

Our Police and Fire Departments continue to work on the front lines, but with extra caution, following Center of Disease Control guidelines. So Fire Department tours and visitations are on hold. And when you call our police department, you'll be asked a few extra questions before we dispatch our officers. You'll be asked whether anyone has a cough, fever, flu symptoms, or has received a positive COVID-19 test result. Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our officers safe.

Yesterday, in coordination with our Police and Fire Departments, City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk, my office issued a temporary emergency directive addressing public health concerns at our grocery stores and markets. It establishes requirements for signage, social distancing, food displays, and sanitation protocols. Each affected business will be personally notified so that any questions can be

addressed and everyone is aware of the new rules. There's no denying that this will be an inconvenience for our merchants—some of which had already established their own safety protocols—and for their customers. I am one of those customers, and for a while at least nothing will be as easy as it was just a few days ago. But our first priority has to be public health and safety, so I ask for your understanding and patience.

Finally, with Governor Whitmer's directive allowing essential public meetings to be held virtually, City Council meetings will continue, but via conference call, which you can listen to on the city YouTube channel. You'll be able to submit written statements and questions for public comment, and we're working out the details for live submissions. Our first virtual meeting will be a special meeting at 7pm this Monday, March 23. I'm sure there'll be some glitches, but please bear with us and we'll get it all worked out.

As I hope you see, the city of Hamtramck is figuring out how we can continue to safely do our work for YOU. That has also been the focus of the 31st District Court and of our Hamtramck Public School system, which even while classes are not in session is working with students and their parents to guide instruction and distribute free meals. This network extends to our county and state partners as well. I applaud Governor Whitmer for her decisive leadership in declaring a state of emergency, closing schools, limiting the size of public gatherings, extending unemployment benefits, and restricting price gouging. These are actions which are largely beyond the scope of cities to enact, but which are part of—and I hope just the beginning of—the expanding safety net that we are going to need. The pandemic is shining a glaring light on the vast economic inequities from which we have long suffered and which make Hamtramck especially vulnerable in a disaster like this. City leadership is focused on advocating for you as we work every day with these partners to craft workarounds and create new programs and practices to meet these unprecedented circumstances in ways that serve you and make the city stronger going forward.

Corporations, businesses, nonprofits, and community groups have also stepped up to serve. Here are a few statewide resources to help you and your loved ones— or places you can consider helping — during the COVID-19 pandemic:

2-1-1 — Call 2-1-1 from any phone to be connected to a list of statewide resources for everything from food and diapers to rental assistance and bus fare.

Consider donating blood. The [American Red Cross](https://www.redcross.org/give-blood.html) is in desperate need of blood donations. <https://www.redcross.org/give-blood.html>

Crisis Connections — 1-866-427-4747 — This 24/7 number provides immediate support and resources for people in emotional crisis and will help determine if you or your loved one need professional help. They provide immediate translation into 155 languages.

Disaster Distress Helpline – 1-800-985-5990 — This 24/7/365 service from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration provides crisis counseling for people going through both natural and human-caused disasters. It's free, multi-lingual and confidential. You can also text TalkWithUs to 66746.

[The State Unemployment Office](#) will extend benefits to workers who are sick, quarantined or taking care of family members who are ill. First responders in the public health community who became ill or quarantined due to exposure are also eligible. Self-employed workers and independent contractors who don't have access to unemployment insurance will now have access to benefits. Call 1-866-500-0017.

Comcast is offering free internet access to low-income families. Internet and cable will not be suspended. Contact your provider for more information.

[Michigan Small Business During COVID-19](https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98158-522285--,00.html) offers guidance for small-business owners, including an expanded low interest loan program. See this website for most current information <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98158-522285--,00.html>

United Way has set up funds to help families with health care, financial resources and other services. https://unitedwaysem.org/support211/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw6sHzBRCbARIsAF8FMpUkKPDdDwHTI7HZNheJQAYbTxuj3GwrDiOG1FGTEus1NjZ3XMPHzEEaAmboEALw_wcB

USBG National Charity Foundation is offering grant assistance to bartenders and their families. <https://www.usbgfoundation.org/beap><https://www.usbgfoundation.org/beap>

In Hamtramck, Gleaners will be distributing food on Monday—that's tomorrow, March 23— at the corner of Holbrook and Joseph Campau from 11 am - 2 pm. As already mentioned, the Hamtramck Public Schools distributes food for students each day at various sites. See the Hamtramck Public Schools website for more information.

www.hamtramckschools.org/home

But beyond these established programs, I want to give a shout out to so many of you who have stepped up and figured out ways to help your neighbor. I know that many of you are doing this at your own expense, and when you may also be out of work or financially unstable. We're a city of small independent businesses, and we're especially vulnerable to any economic downturn. What's more, much of our local economy is centered on food and entertainment, and many of these businesses have been forced to close or drastically restrict their operations and staff. And yet these individuals, organizations, and businesses have demonstrated over and over again their generosity, their neighborliness, their ingenuity, and their humanity. They—you—make Hamtramck proud, and worth standing up for.

I hesitate to name names, because I know I'll leave someone out and opportunities keep evolving, but several restaurants are offering discounts and free delivery in the city limits, and Hamtramck Moose Lodge's Friday fish dinner crew is delivering free to seniors; Friendship House, J&E Community Response, and Our Lady Queen of Apostles have been distributing free food; Muslim Family Services is offering limited rental, utility, and food assistance to people of all faiths. And individuals have been compiling lists of local residents willing to help their neighbors with things like meal and medicine delivery; the public Facebook group Hamtramck COVID-19 Response is a good place to keep up with this constantly changing menu of information, as is the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information Center Facebook page, set up by Rev. Sharon Buttry, which includes a tab for requesting or offering

help. Everyone, it seems, wants to help. And that should make us all proud and give us all hope.

www.facebook.com/groups/1897663190377647/

www.facebook.com/coronavirus_info

[Muslim Family Services, Director Ms. Summi Uddin 313-366-6800](#)

If anyone else has services to offer, please share your info here on the City's page.

So far we have one confirmed COVID-19 case in Hamtramck. I know you join with me in wishing that person a speedy and full recovery, and in hoping that this case is our only one. But we are all vulnerable, and all profoundly affected by this virus in ways we never could have imagined just a week ago. We're all adjusting to this new reality and the fears and challenges it brings. And we can't even join together in the ways we used to in order to bolster each other's courage and bear each other's burdens. We have to find new ways to do that, from 6 feet away, at least for now. And that's what so many of you are doing.

So here we are, Hamtramckans. Here we are—our city administration and public servants, our community and statewide partners, our business owners and their employees, our institutional leaders and staff, our faith communities, our friends, families, and neighbors. Here we are, you and me and us, together creating Hamtramck's response to this threat. We don't know how long this emergency will last. But we do know that Hamtramck has lasted for nearly 100 years. We know that we are resilient. We know what we need to do, and we're all figuring out how to get it done.

Thanks to all of you for being so cooperative with those who are on the front lines. To those in our medical community, our police and fire, our grocery store and restaurant workers, small business owners, and all those who are providing help and care during this time. Thank you. Shukran. Dziękujemy. Dyakuyu. Hvala. Faleminderit. Dhan'yabāda.

I wish you all good health and happiness. Take care of yourselves. Stay home. Wash your hands. And look out for each other. Like you always do.