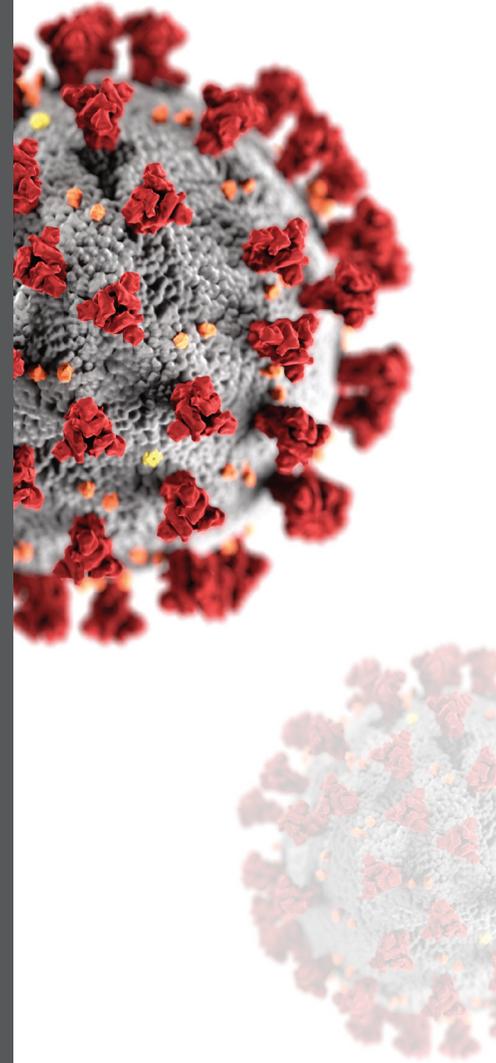


Vol. 1

COVID-19

Historical Perspective

February 2020 - March 2021



City of
Coral
Springs
COVID-19
Historical
Perspective

Volume One

*February 2020-
March 2021*

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After more than 100 years since the Influenza pandemic of 1918 caused mass casualties worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged with unprecedented effects. Aside from lessons learned during Ebola and similar outbreaks, and in spite of preparation, there was no comprehensive “playbook” to guide local, state, or national officials on how best to prepare, respond, stabilize, and recover from a global pandemic.

Through full-scale exercises as well as actual natural disasters and manmade emergency events occurring years before this pandemic, the City of Coral Springs was able to put in place strategies that would ultimately prove valuable to providing an effective response. Frequent review and updating of the city’s Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), and Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) allowed the city to function in a proactive rather than reactive role.

Utilizing staff at every level of the organization in “non-traditional” roles and organizing a command-and-control structure based on the Incident Command System (ICS) and National Response Framework (NRF) proved key in addressing the myriad of challenges and ever-changing complexities of the pandemic. Organizing responsibilities and establishing a formal chain of command allowed all departments to know their role and how they were expected to support the city’s response. Of equal importance was the need to provide clear, concise, and frequent internal and external communications.

Ensuring a safe and healthy workforce to continue to serve, provide, and respond to the community was a priority. Strategies employed that met this concern were developed and implemented early on and are ongoing. As recommendations and guidelines change, so do the tactics necessary to support the mission.

In addition to this pandemic affecting the safety, health, and wellbeing of millions of people, the financial stability was jeopardized for many as well. While disasters can be devastating to the economy, generally the effects are limited to a geographical location. With this pandemic, the economic impact was global, and has proven to have a lasting effect. Trends emerged that changed industry and human behavior. In response, strategies were developed to help mitigate the financial impact to the residents and businesses within the community.

This document is intended to provide a historical perspective of how the City of Coral Springs demonstrated an ability to navigate uncharted territory through proactivity, preparedness, leadership, perseverance, resilience, and effective communication. This document was compiled through interviews with employees, city leadership, and local business leaders. Hundreds of pages of documents were compiled and reviewed in the preparation of this publication. If confronted with a similar event in the future, this document will serve as the framework for guidance to municipal response. These strategies and lessons learned may be adapted to improve crisis leadership for other organizations.

1.1 CITY BACKGROUND

The City of Coral Springs is approximately 24-square miles with an excess of 130,000 residents located in the northwest section of Broward County, Florida. The City of Coral Springs is a full-service municipality supporting the needs of residents, visitors, and businesses.

The City of Coral Springs has experienced numerous natural disasters resulting from hurricanes, tornadoes, and flooding as well as response following the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The city's dedicated employees, volunteers, and elected officials strive to be leaders in planning, responding to, and recovering from any disaster.

2.0 VISION AND LEADERSHIP

It is important to communicate vision as early as possible. A positive outcome is dependent upon an established culture prior to an incident. Early in the pandemic, at the suggestion of a team member to the City Manager, the City of Coral Springs adopted the phrase "One Team - One Mission." This was borne out of an inclusive culture where employees feel empowered to contribute to the response. The importance of working as a team, regardless of one's area of responsibility, is crucial to meet the organization's vision, mission, and core values.

A collaborative decision-making process was established at the executive level and distilled through the organization. While opposing views were welcomed, once the plan was agreed upon, staff executed the plan in a unified manner.

2.1 PREPAREDNESS AND PROACTIVITY

The key to a successful outcome in any emergency is a sustained preparedness and planning effort while remaining adaptable to changing conditions. Effective preparedness must be ongoing and cannot focus only on emergencies that are most common.

The City of Coral Springs conducts full-scale exercises and planning sessions annually to ensure preparedness. Following certain events, an After Action Report (AAR) is completed, including an implementation and improvement plan. Examples of real-life emergencies and exercises include:

- 2016 – During the annual Hurricane planning exercise, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) staff was moved out of their work location and asked to work remotely on their mobile devices. Lessons learned allowed the city to enhance their remote capabilities through hardware and software solutions.
- 2017 – During widespread flooding that occurred in the city, staff saw an opportunity to enhance the community call center with personnel from the Human Resources Department. This laid the groundwork for future activations.
- 2018 – The city conducted a cyber security exercise to evaluate the organization's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). This resulted in the Information Technology (IT) Department implementing measures to enhance remote work locations with cloud-based systems. This improved the city's resiliency.

- 2019 – COOP was reevaluated, focusing on loss of personnel, facilities, connectivity, and power. Lessons learned allowed the city to transition to remote work sites and enabled realignment of staff at the start of the pandemic.
- 2019 – The city, in conjunction with the Florida Department of Health (FDOH), planned for a full-scale Point of Dispensing (POD) exercise. This POD exercise allowed the city to plan for critical elements of a mass vaccination plan, which ultimately came to fruition 18 months later. Lessons learned from the planning of this exercise allowed the city to support multiple COVID testing sites and later support an FDOH COVID-19 vaccination site that provided approximately 1,000 vaccinations daily as well as support additional vaccination campaigns.

Early on, the city monitored the COVID-19 crisis that was unfolding around the world. In anticipation of this virus ultimately reaching the United States, the city assembled a core group of department leaders to coordinate a response to this threat. This group, led by Emergency Management, included representatives of public safety, finance, and communications. On March 3, 2020, action plans were developed to ensure the city's continuity of operations, safety of the workforce, health of the residents, especially the vulnerable, and implementation of an internal and external communication/information plan. Additionally, during the planning process the potential for critical shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) were identified, and actions were taken to ensure a consistent supply of essential PPE.

2.2 INITIAL CRITICAL DECISIONS

As the threat of a global pandemic reached South Florida, the Coral Springs leadership team met to determine the greatest priorities and established a plan to move forward, while maintaining continuity of operations. Early preparations for the pandemic included designing a sequenced-based guide, actions that would take place once the virus reached a specific location or infection rate and putting on paper the first decisions that would be made by order of necessity. Those preparations included the increased ordering of necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) for public safety personnel, sanitization equipment, sanitization supplies, and opening an emergency budgetary account for COVID-19. The legal team was instrumental in carefully interpreting orders to ensure what was provided to residents and businesses was accurate.

Decisions made by city government needed to be cohesive with surrounding cities and county orders. Coral Springs met with leaders from surrounding cities as well as the Broward County Manager to discuss and formulate plans for continuity in the area.

2.3 COMMISSION DECISIONS AND ACTIONS

On Monday, March 9, 2020, the State of Florida declared the COVID-19 outbreak a public health emergency. At the request of Mayor Scott Brook, the Coral Springs City Commission convened an emergency meeting on Friday, March 13, 2020, during which the Commission declared a State of Emergency. This meeting was held within 48 hours notice, allowing for a declaration to be issued which provided the City Manager with the necessary authority to manage a disaster. Future Commission meetings were held virtually, and the City Manager

conducted daily briefings with the Mayor and Commission members to address ongoing issues and questions/concerns from the residents, businesses, and visitors. To comply with Florida's Sunshine Law which prohibits elected officials from meeting to discuss official business outside of a "noticed" meeting, the daily briefings were held in a "listen-only" mode, via Zoom technology.

Following the initial Executive Orders issued by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis closing certain establishments of group gatherings such as nightclubs and bars, and limiting restaurant seating capacity to 50%, on March 19th the city issued an Emergency Order closing all fitness studios, dance studios, gymnasiums, or any other place of business that has or hosts individual or group physical activity.

On March 26, 2020, the city issued an Emergency Order for a city-wide shut down and formal isolation, encouraging residents to shelter in place. The phrase "Safer at Home" became the standard to limit community spread of COVID-19.

As the pandemic progressed, the city adhered to comprehensive emergency orders issued by the State of Florida and Broward County.



[*Click here or scan QR Code for Emergency Orders issued by the city.](#)

Through the Incident Support Services Branch, several new policies were implemented to support flexible work arrangements such as emergency telework for select positions. These policies included tracking of payroll hours, remote use of city issued equipment and temporary re-assignment of staff to emergency response duties. Additional family leave policy provisions were implemented to address COVID-19 illnesses and addressed ongoing care for dependents as well as childcare needs. Timely communication was essential to comply with emerging legislative changes. Other benefit programs changes driven by legislation were communicated to provide greater access to retirement savings for employees experiencing financial hardship or loss of income due to COVID-19.

Workplace Safety and Health policies were created to formalize proper use of PPE for non-First Responders, return-to-work guidelines, Safety and Health preventive measures and guidance on out-of-the area travel. Human Resources staff supported the Safety and Health Team by preparing and issuing citywide communications to employees to support full compliance with all new safety and health requirements. Safety and Health Officers provided personalized support to assist employees in navigating through COVID-19 when they became ill or exposed to others who tested positive.



[* Click here or scan QR Code for Human Resource Policies](#)

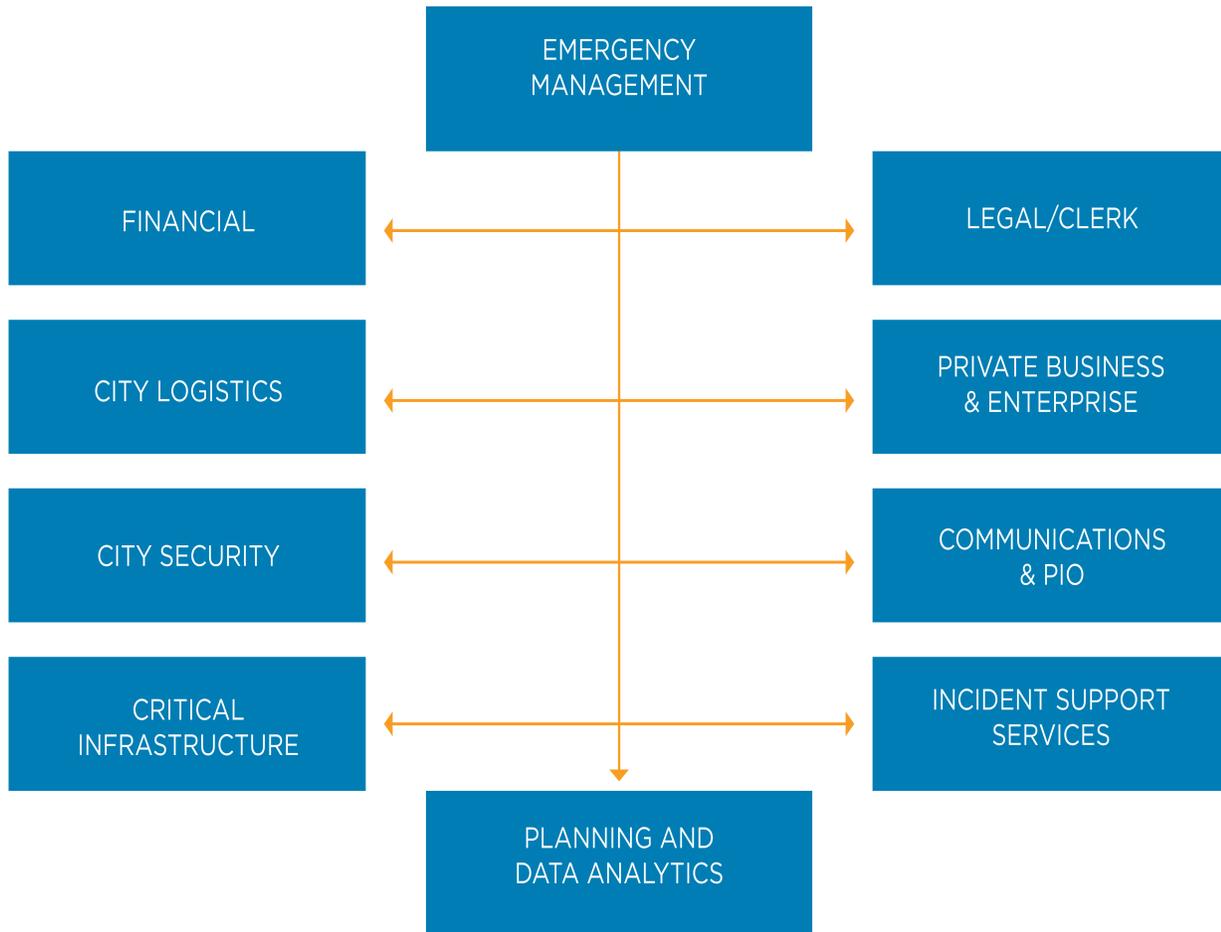
3.0 COMMAND STRUCTURE

History has shown that the utilization of the Incident Command System (ICS) provides the necessary structure and through Unified Command allows any complex event to be managed efficiently and effectively. This system allows for the integration of multiple functional areas into a common organizational structure working with unity of command. This structure is encouraged to be followed at all levels of government.

For decades, public safety entities have realized the importance of utilizing ICS, but it was not until the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, that government leadership at the local, state, and federal level was compelled to utilize ICS through a Homeland Security Presidential Directive. The City of Coral Springs leadership has embraced ICS for many years to manage exercises as well as real life incidents. This proved to be a vital component of the city's management during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On March 16, 2020, the city formally implemented ICS to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. The ICS structure titles were adapted to fit the event, which allowed the city to address all areas of need from preparation to response, and ultimately recovery.

INCIDENT COMMAND



Initially, the 10 functional areas met every morning, seven days a week, from March 12, 2020 through April 17, 2020, to maintain open lines of communication to effectively respond to the ongoing crisis; all with the mission to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of residents and employees, while maintaining effective operations. As most department directors were assigned within ICS, their daily duties were shifted to assistant directors and managers. Effective April 20, 2020, the ICS meetings were held three times per week and from August 10, 2020, the ICS meetings were held once weekly.

In addition to utilizing ICS, leadership established what is oftentimes referred to as a “Battle Rhythm” for day-to-day activities. Common tasks are allocated to set times and/or days for consistency. For example, the leaders of the 10 functional areas of the ICS structure met daily at 8:30 AM virtually via Microsoft Teams. In these meetings they would review the past days actions and plan for the coming day, establishing an Incident Action Plan (IAP). At 11:00 AM each day, Incident Command, Legal, and Communications & Marketing met virtually via Zoom with the Mayor and City Commissioners to provide up-to-date information about the incident. A daily

message from the City Manager was distributed throughout the organization containing information obtained throughout the day from meetings and actions taken.

4.0 FUNCTIONAL AREAS

The city adapted the ICS structure to meet the needs of the incident. This better defined and aligned city departments during this long-term emergency.

4.1 SAFETY AND SECURITY

Planning for the preservation of Public Safety began in February of 2020. Leadership from Emergency Management, Police, and Fire Departments met with our Medical Directors to develop detailed preventative measures based on the most current and ever-changing information to ensure the safety, health, and wellbeing of this essential workforce. The focus of this team addressed three areas: first responders, the general public, and the vulnerable population. The well-being of our first responders was essential to ensure that we had a healthy response force. When interacting with the general public, safety protocols were in place to provide the highest level of care and minimize any potential transmission of COVID-19. The most vulnerable populations at risk for significant adverse reactions to COVID-19 were the elderly and senior living facilities, adult living facilities, and skilled nursing homes. We conducted a multi-prong approach initiated through emergency orders, in-person interactions, resource allocation assistance, and bi-weekly compliance to keep this population as safe as possible.

Part of this plan was our response to calls for service. That effort began with our Communications Center.

The Safety and Security Section of the Incident Command Structure identified several Safety Officers who worked to develop safety protocols and plans to keep our members safe. They published these guidelines and made themselves available for any and all questions Department members had pertaining to COVID-19 and safety protocols. The Safety Officers were the designated point of contact for all members who were exposed or felt ill. The Safety Officers arranged for the employee to be tested and assisted them with quarantining procedures. The Safety Officers made daily phone calls to the sick to follow up on their symptoms and provide valuable information. They also guided the employees on the proper "return to work" procedures. Safety Officers kept constant check on the health and welfare of employees including those employees who were in a work from home status. The Safety Officers constantly updated safety, cleaning, and testing protocols as more information became available about COVID-19 throughout the pandemic.

At the onset of the pandemic, School Resource Officers who were not in school because of school closures, were reassigned to big box stores (Sam's Club, Home Depot, Costco, Lowes, etc.) to keep the peace as COVID-driven panic buying emerged. This reallocation of resources kept the peace and assisted our citizens with an orderly experience at these locations. Additionally, the Safety and Security Section requested the Police Department's Traffic Unit to

organize the weekly food drives that were conducted to help struggling families throughout the pandemic. The food distribution events were well planned and secured.

The Safety and Security Section of the Incident Command Structure monitored crime patterns and calls for service in an effort to maintain appropriate staffing levels. The Command Staff developed contingency schedules to make sure we had proper coverage to handle patrol functions in the event that a large outbreak of COVID cases occurred. A significant challenge came after the death of George Floyd and protests and demonstrations occurred in our jurisdiction. These protests were a direct conflict between First Amendment protected demonstrations and pandemic related Emergency Orders. The Department's Civil Unrest and Tactical Support (CUTS) team was activated as a precautionary measure. The team was utilized as a show of force during one of the nine protests that occurred within our city. They were successful in keeping the peace without engaging protestors.

Although COVID-19 cases were reported throughout the city, we were able to maintain adequate staffing levels to preserve the safety and order within our community.

Safety Officer Program

Safety Officers from police, fire and human resources were assigned to case manage symptomatic or exposed employees and family members. Safety Officers were responsible for scheduling of tests, medical case management including tracking of COVID-19 exposures, contact tracing, reporting of illnesses, and developing and applying safety, health, and wellness protocols for city employees and their family members.

[*Click here or scan QR Code for Safety Officer Handbook](#)



Emergency Communications Center and Procedures

The City of Coral Springs manages their own Emergency Communications Center, also known as Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for 911 and non-emergency calls for service. They also dispatch police and fire rescue units within the city and fire rescue units for the City of Parkland. The Emergency Communications Center is located within the Public Safety Building under the direction of the Police Department. Early on, measures were put in place to limit entry to non-communications personnel in the center as well as the mandatory wearing of masks by all personnel with access into the center. During scheduled breaks, dispatchers had to maintain social distancing and the wearing of a mask unless eating or drinking. These early measures proved beneficial to limiting the exposure of these vital workers to COVID-19.

As part of the Call Taker screening process, Protocol 36 or "P-36" as it was called, was put in place. This screening protocol was initially developed in 2014-2016 when first responders were preparing for the potential Ebola virus outbreak. For each 911 and non-emergency call for service, Dispatchers conducted a health screening, asking the caller if anyone has been ill, the types of symptoms, if anyone was recently exposed to someone that is COVID-19 positive, or if

they were COVID-19 positive. Those notes are then reported into the dispatch database and communicated to police and fire rescue personnel during their response to all calls for service. While a “positive P-36” patient alerted first responders to the likely presence of the virus, a negative P-36 was never assumed to mean responders should let their guard down. This was just one step used by the Communications Center to heighten the situational awareness of all responders.

Response to Medical Emergencies

Fire Rescue personnel were required to wear as a minimum N-95 respirators, gowns, gloves, and eye protection on each call. Additionally, personnel would try to limit how many members came in contact with the patient and if possible, remove the patient to the outside to conduct their exam or further treatment. Responding police on medical calls were placed on standby in masks, only making entry to assist as needed.

Decontamination Procedures

After transporting a patient, Fire Rescue personnel conducted a thorough decontamination process prior to leaving the hospital. The ambulance was disinfected with an aerosol cleaner, and all surfaces were wiped down. Personnel would discard their PPE and decontaminate themselves by handwashing, taking a shower, and changing into a fresh uniform prior to returning to service.

Police Department Challenges

The Police Department went through many changes and had to overcome many challenges during the COVID-19 Pandemic. All employees of the Public Safety building, sworn or civilian, were required to wear PPE in the building and while performing their duties outside the building. Safety protocols were put into place that restricted contact with the public. The lobby had restricted access for the public. Two-way communication devices were utilized for walk-up customers who had business with the many functions provided at the Public Safety Building. The department used an “Online Reporting” platform for years, and the pandemic allowed staff to greatly increase the use of this type of reporting. In addition, the “Report by Phone” option was promoted as another form of limited contact.

Police Department Command Staff developed contingency schedules to make sure the department had proper coverage to handle patrol functions in the event of a large outbreak of COVID-19 cases. City Incident Command issued continued messaging about proper PPE usage, safety protocols, and other critical information pertaining to the pandemic and officer safety. Guidelines were developed for officers who had to quarantine.

A lieutenant was assigned to serve in the logistics branch, working within the ICS structure to secure PPE and other protective supplies to insure proper sanitation measures.

A police sergeant was assigned as a Safety Officer working within the ICS structure to assist in developing safety protocols and plans to keep employees safe. The Safety Officer was the police department's designated point of contact for any employee or family member who was sick or exposed to COVID-19. The Safety Officer arranged for the employee to be tested and

assisted with quarantine procedures. The Safety Officer regularly followed up with those who were quarantined, regardless of the time, or day of the week.

Early in the pandemic, shift and squad control briefings were held outside to ensure the safety of our personnel. These were essential to providing communications which contributed to morale. Officers were socially distanced and wore masks while participating in the briefings.

At the onset of the pandemic, in accordance with our emergency operations plan, (due to school closures), School Resource Officers were reassigned to assist big box stores as COVID-19-driven panic buying emerged. This reallocation of resources kept the peace and assisted customers with an orderly experience.

With the Safer at Home order issued, traffic on the roadways was significantly diminished. As people ventured out of their homes, speeding became an issue. This dangerous trend continued to grow as people became comfortable with traveling at higher speeds. This was a challenge that the police department had to address.

As a consequence of the pandemic, proactive policing was curtailed to limit person-to-person contact. When enforcement action was necessary, Adult and Juvenile Civil Citations or a Notice to Appear were issued in lieu of a physical arrest. This limited the number of inmates housed in the Broward County jail system.

At the onset of the pandemic, the Police Department saw a reduction in calls for service and crime. This reduction was short-lived, and within a few weeks, the police department experienced an increase in EMS-assist calls. Due to increased financial stress, alcohol and drug consumption, and job loss as the pandemic progressed, calls related to domestic violence and mental health increased.

As federal stimulus programs were developed, criminals became more creative and took new opportunities to defraud citizens. A spike in economic crimes and fraud targeted federal stimulus programs through email phishing, and US mail theft of checks. We received reports of elder fraud, resulting in the loss of tens of thousands of dollars. Common fraud practices included phone calls claiming to be a utility provider, COVID-19 test agent, and impersonation of law enforcement.

As a result of COVID-19 the Broward County Court system established Virtual Deposition Rooms where officers could provide sworn testimony. The utilization of this technology allowed the courts to function during the pandemic.

As emergency orders were issued, affecting local business, the police department partnered with code enforcement to educate and enforce emergency orders. It was important for the local business community to comply with orders and to know that we were all in this together and would work to find solutions.

In the summer of 2020, the city contended with protests and demonstrations, and the police department had to adjust its enforcement of COVID-19 related emergency orders to allow individuals to exercise their first amendment right.

Although Police Department employees experienced cases of COVID-19, services to the community were maintained. Regardless of the pandemic, the professional staff of the Coral Springs PSAP answered 911 calls and appropriately dispatched resources to emergencies to ensure the public at large remained safe.

Detectives

Investigative field work by detectives was conducted via telephone, video calling, and other technology to limit exposure. The Police Department established an offsite interview room which was utilized by detectives for in-person interviews, victim statements, and interrogations of suspects, preventing exposure in the Public Safety Building. This facility was properly decontaminated after each use.

Communications Center

To prevent public safety telecommunicators from exposure to COVID-19 that could result in quarantine, severe illness, or death, access was restricted to Coral Springs PSAP employees only, or those who had essential business within the center. Protecting our telecommunicators was paramount to ensuring that public safety was not impeded.

Our Dispatch Center operates with a time = life mentality. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we altered our protocols to include a list of health screening questions to identify the risk factor(s) to determine if the caller or anyone related to the call had symptoms of COVID-19. This information assisted us in sending the proper response as well as making sure the personnel responding was utilizing the proper level of protective gear.

Training and Community Involvement

Training is an essential function of a high-performing police agency. COVID-19 restricted the ability to train officers at a level that was routinely expected. Training that was mandated by the state was accomplished through innovative means including virtual and socially distanced methods outdoors.

Community Outreach

The Police Department's commitment to assist the community during the COVID-19 pandemic was instrumental for our food distribution, COVID-19 test sites, and COVID-19 vaccination efforts.

When our community was unable to celebrate milestones or special events, the Department participated in parades to make the event memorable. Although the pandemic had a profound change on traditional celebrations, the city worked hard to make these events special in a safe and healthy way.

Fire Department Challenges

The Fire Department continued to provide the highest level of service while navigating through the pandemic. Leadership constantly remained proactive rather than reactive in developing their policies, procedures, and operational guidelines. Leveraging technology already in place in the city, working with the IT Department, Fire Rescue developed detailed mapping that depicted known COVID-19 "hot spots," which aided in the response of all public safety partners.

Daily meetings were conducted amongst the command staff to determine additional measures to be put in place to protect our response force. The internal changes to operations were adapted seamlessly by all members to ensure that the highest level of service was maintained. The Support Services Logistics Division worked tirelessly to ensure the department had the necessary personal protective equipment and supplies to disinfect apparatus and fire stations, and also acted as an early warning system to identify supply chain shortages to come. This resulted in the city ordering PPE in February before national shortages occurred.

Fire Station Guidelines

Fire Rescue personnel are housed together for a minimum of 24 hours a day, typically 5-7 persons at a time. Due to the nature of their work and the living conditions, procedures were put into place to limit exposure and potential spread of COVID-19. Besides the typical wearing of masks and social distancing, personnel had to separate while eating, eliminate sharing of meals or cooking together, and wash hands frequently. Fire rescue stations were disinfected by a "fogger-type" method every day and all members had their temperature checked twice daily. All visitors including family members were restricted from coming to the station to interact with the crews. This continued for well over a year and impacted the members as they missed seeing their significant others and children on holidays. These measures were put in place to ensure that a healthy response force was maintained at all times. The members adapted to the changes knowing they were put in place to protect them and their families.

4.2 COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Clear, concise internal, and external communication is key when managing any emergency or crisis. People need to be connected to accurate information in order to make informed decisions. Two-way communication is crucial to alleviating misinformation, rapidly changing information, and frustration.

Coral Springs residents and businesses already relied on the city for regular, consistent messaging related to events, development projects, utilities, emergencies, and recognitions. With more than 10 years of extended social media use and a focus on digital communication strategies, the city is fortunate to have a large audience of active and engaged followers. This connectivity was vital for quick dissemination of evolving information throughout the pandemic.

The public required accurate information about the virus, the potential for spread, and actions the city was taking to protect the community, while maintaining its continuity of operations. As part of the ICS structure the Communications and Public Information Section developed and implemented ongoing communications strategies geared for both residents and businesses starting with a sequenced-based guide. This guide served as a roadmap about what information should be communicated once there were detected cases first in the state, county, neighboring community, and ultimately Coral Springs. This was a planned approach to provide information without causing panic. With community spread growing and quickly reaching the City of Coral Springs, the sequence-based plan was instrumental for the first two-weeks of the COVID-19 crisis.

[*Click here or scan QR Code for Sequence Based Guide, "Infectious Disease Matrix."](#)



Throughout the pandemic, communications strategies included a myriad of tools to ensure messaging was effectively disseminated. This included digital communications, live stream, CityTV, city radio, printed post cards, banners, signage, reverse call lines and text messaging. The use of multi-media platforms not only provided for consistent messaging, but it also allowed for public access and input at public meetings.

The City Call Center, which is a function of the Communications/Public Information Section under ICS, was fully operational at the onset of the pandemic. Staffed with employees from Human Resources, the center provided vital information to concerned residents and business owners related to the pandemic, city operations and emergency orders. With new technology implemented, the center was operational remotely, seven-days a week at the onset of the pandemic. The center remained operational until March 2021.

During a crisis, internal communication is key. At the onset of the city declaring a state of emergency, Incident Command worked with the Communications/Public Information section to provide daily communications to all employees and elected officials. This information included important updates about city operations, virus spread and encouragement. As stated by the Project Consultant, employees interviewed for this document indicated they felt included in higher-level thinking, planning, and concern for their individual well-being, and the safety of their families. This messaging continues in a weekly format, which includes updates about COVID-19 and important city-related information.

Website, City TV, and City Radio

The Coral Springs website, City TV, and City Radio provided residents with the most up-to-date information related to the virus, its spread, services, testing, and Emergency Orders issued. In addition, City TV and the website broadcasted all public meetings via live stream including Commission meetings, Special Magistrate, Charter School Board meetings, and Commission Workshops allowing the city to avoid gatherings and groups, while maintaining transparency in government.

Digital Communications and Public Information

The City of Coral Springs issued more than 50 press releases specific to Emergency Orders, city closures, and testing. The already robust audiences in social media platforms including NextDoor, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram made for quick dissemination of information. Additionally, the city utilized a text message option through Everbridge/Nixle which links important information and news releases via text to residents. Coral Springs was one of the first municipalities to use this system for text messaging since the state and other agencies began adopting its use.

Call Center

The Call Center, which reports to the Communications and Public Information Section, was operational when the State of Emergency was declared. The Center, which is managed by Human Resource personnel, fielded resident questions related to COVID-19 and restrictions.

Additionally, the Call Center created a recorded line where standard information about COVID-19 could be found. These messages were available by “call in” for seniors and those who do not use digital technology and provided in both English and Spanish.

The Call Center team was able to fully operate through remote access and served as a conduit for the Public Information Section, providing empathetic support to address questions from the public regarding pandemic concerns. The team members worked tirelessly to help translate complex emergency executive orders into terms the public could understand. They also assisted with pro-active outreach to vulnerable members in our community and supported the emergency management team with vaccine operations.

Accurate and Informative Public Information

Recognizing the public had valid health and wellness concerns about the COVID-19 virus, the Communications/PIO section created a Facebook live series, which connected residents with our Medical Director, Dr. Peter Antevy. The weekly live stream hosted on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, through a program called StreamYard, provided an opportunity for the community to ask Dr. Antevy questions, reducing the spread of inaccurate information. Each program began with a COVID-19 status update, including state and county analytics, the capacity at local hospitals, and other important medical information. This connectivity also allowed the city to share fact-based medical information and city updates. Residents expressed gratitude for the cautionary and free-flowing information directly from a medical expert. Projecting calm and thoughtful decision making to prevent community-wide panic is essential to a communications strategy during a pandemic.

Providing residents with information using multiple media platforms helped to keep residents calm, while providing important information.

Understanding people were adapting to a new normal, especially children, the city took the opportunity to entertain people with a variety of virtual classes, informational videos, and activities to engage youth. Utilizing recreation professionals the city hosted dance, acrobatics, tennis, water safety, and swimming videos among many others. Fun graphics were created to inform residents of new COVID-19 protocols, and city utility concerns.

Commission Communications

The Mayor and City Commission play a vital role in keeping residents informed. To ensure the elected officials had the most up-to-day information through the pandemic, staff conducted a daily Commission Briefing at 11:00 a.m. daily from March 12-April 17, 2020. To adhere to Florida's “Sunshine Laws,” Commissioners received information during a listen-only mode phone call. This daily update ensured the Commission was apprised of accurate information, which was relayed to constituents. In addition to the meeting, a Commission Brief working document was

disseminated to Commissioners at the conclusion of each call for easier reference. From April 20-August 7, 2020, Commission Briefings and phone calls were held three times per week; and August 10, 2020, until present day, the Commission receives a weekly COVID-19 Brief document.

Commission Meetings, Public Access

Florida Statute requires public access to government meetings. On March 1, 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis issued Emergency Order 20-69, allowing cities to provide remote access to public meetings. The city was required, and ensured, the opportunity for public input and participation. Meetings were accessed via Zoom, a web-based meeting platform, and streamed live on City TV, and online. Public comment was provided made by phone, email, and outside of City Hall, where access to the meeting via an iPad was located.

Businesses Focused News

To assist with Economic Development and business connectivity throughout the pandemic, businesses who have a business tax license in the city were added to a news release distribution system to communicate important information related to closures, requirements, curfews, and other mandates for operation. This proved instrumental in assisting Coral Springs businesses to better understand emergency orders as well as opportunities to obtain grants, loans, and PPE.

Signage, Flyers, and Banners

To assist the business community and ensure the safety of residents, flyers were designed, printed, and distributed for businesses to display about social distancing, sanitization, and facial coverings. The city printed booklets for businesses that reopened, providing a comprehensive guide to safely open. For senior residents, instead of the usual Forever Young newsletter, a communication postcard was created with COVID-19 information targeting those over the age of 60, who were less likely to engage in social media use. At city entryways, banners displayed led residents back to the city website for important information about COVID-19. A special issue of the city magazine "Under the Sun", was created alerting residents about COVID-19, the city's response, and special programming. When mask and glove discards were being improperly disposed of in parking lots and became a health concern, printed signage was developed for the business community to post.

[*Click here or scan QR Code for Press Releases, Stories, Scripts, and a sampling of Social Graphics](#)



4.3 LOGISTICS

The COVID-19 pandemic created the greatest logistical challenge in history for both the individual seeking household items and businesses and municipalities seeking to continue day to day operations. Personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning products, disinfecting products, and even toilet paper was in limited supply. Agencies were challenged by multiple types of disinfection methods and solutions, all touting they were the best. One of the most important elements of PPE, the mask, created a daily challenge sourcing and providing different employees in different roles the level of protection they needed, that was further complicated

by the constantly changing CDC guidelines. Those responsible for logistics had to not only ensure the presence of the regular supplies but were responsible for the acquisition of mass amounts of protective gear and disinfection solutions via creative supply chains.

Fortunately, staff anticipated the supply chain disruptions and shortages early on and began to stockpile vital supplies to ensure they had adequate quantities to provide for their first responders.

As part of the initial planning process, leadership determined as part of their comprehensive Infectious Disease Response Plan that they should maintain a nine-month supply of PPE and cleaning products and disinfection solutions. In order to determine the quantities needed, the Logistics Section had to establish a daily usage or “burn rate” in each Department in the city. From this number, they determine what was needed to maintain the nine-month supply.

As the supply chain situation escalated, it became apparent that typical procurement policies requiring approved vendors would not fulfill orders. The typical traditional vendors used for these products quickly became depleted of supply. Because of the Emergency Declaration issued by the City Commission, a path was cleared to waive regular procurement policies allowing the City Manager to exercise his due diligence and approve purchases that previously required Commission approval.

Relaxed procurement rules allowed access to new vendors which proved to help with half the battle. Still a challenge was finding the supplies, vetting the products, ordering the necessary quantities, and taking delivery of the product. Far too many times orders were canceled soon after they were received by a vendor. With such a shortage “knock offs” began to surface, especially with regards to masks. The typical surgical mask and N95 respirator were “copied” with less efficiency than National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH) approved devices. This forced the Logistics Section to investigate all products that were offered other than those from a known standard. The PPE challenge was a struggle, but through relentless persistence, and countless hours of validation and research the city did not suffer shortages.

4.4 INCIDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The Incident Support Services Section was developed to provide the “behind the scenes” support for the city during these long-term type incidents. Functions include staffing, contract services, coordination of telework, support technology needs, and ensuring network security.

Information Technology

Connectivity through proven, safe channels was paramount during the pandemic. As an outcome of the recent COOP exercise evaluating the possibility of remote work sites, in late January the IT Department began evaluating software for remote connectivity, testing the existing Virtual Private Network (VPN), evaluating teleconferencing platforms, and ordering additional laptop computers to prepare for the possibility of employees having to work remotely. Cybersecurity was a concern when the city shifted to teleworking. Particular attention was given daily to ensure the networks stayed secure.

Within 72 hours of the Emergency Order, IT staff had essential personnel connected and working remotely and within the first three weeks, all city staff capable of working remotely were connected and operational. Teleconferencing was conducted via Microsoft Teams and an additional 65 laptops were received to ensure any worker who needed one, had access to one.

In addition to shifting employees into work from home environments, equally important was keeping the One-Stop-Shop and other services functioning and accessible to residents online. This included:

- Water billing
- Building permits
- Building inspections
- Code Compliance
- Business Tax
- Zoning inquires
- Landlord registrations
- Obtaining police reports

For three years leading up to the pandemic, the IT and Building Department had worked to implement the eTrakit System. By February 2020, the System went live with just one permit type and by October 2020, all 210 permit types were processed electronically.

Keeping construction moving is vital to continued economic development. Large-scale construction projects which required oversized architectural plans were physically dropped off at City Hall and quarantined for 24 hours. Afterwards the plans were reviewed and through an application called Bluebeam, comments and questions could be exchanged between architects, contractors, and inspectors virtually.

4.5 PLANNING AND ANALYTICS

The Planning and Data Analytics Section was responsible for the collection and analysis of data related to the pandemic response. The team was responsible for developing Situation Reports (SIT REPS) and the Incident Action Plan (IAP). The team determined trends and reviewed comparative data analytics to assist Command in the decision-making process. This team consisted of employees in the IT, EM, and Budget Departments.

The team also was responsible for developing and maintaining an accurate timeline of the city's response to this pandemic which is intended to aid in the development of after-action reports and "lessons learned".

[*Click here or scan QR Code for Planning and Analytics reports.](#)



4.6 CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Critical Infrastructure Section traditional primary function was to focus on maintaining services. When faced with an impending storm, such as a hurricane, cities typically shore up their critical infrastructure, and plan for recovery. During a pandemic, a primary focus for this section is keeping utilities operational. This area concentrated on roads, fleet, community development, building inspection, private infrastructure, parks infrastructure, waste management/collection, and liaison to other infrastructure providers.

Initial areas of concern were keeping frontline workers healthy, providing for social distancing at city public works facilities, and ensuring the delivery of essential services such as water, sewer, and garbage.

In addition to the illness prevention precautions, other backup planning continued with sharing services with other cities and the County and as another layer of precaution, a system was set up to open water interconnects with border cities Coconut Creek and Margate.

Development Services Department

The Development Services Department is responsible for Community Development, Planning, Zoning, and Code Compliance. Community Development staff reached out to all businesses that were in current development projects. With the initial shutdown, Community Development staff worked diligently to come up with alternatives to keep development moving such as; having large architectural plans go into a drop-off quarantine system, implementing electronic site plan submittals, temporarily lifting the city's strict signage policy allowing businesses to print additional temporary signs alerting residents of the businesses open, and allowing businesses to expanded their geographical space to accommodate additional outdoor seating for restaurants and allowing larger curbside pick-up for restaurants, grocery, and retail.

For internal operations, Community Development worked closely with the IT Department to make the following bill paying processes available exclusively online:

- Code Compliance fines
- Business Tax receipts
- Zoning petitions
- Landlord registrations

Community Development staff created Mortgage and Rental Assistance Programs to help residents with mortgage, rent and utility payments. When the application window opened for Rental Assistance, Community Development used the gymnasium for application intake in order to expedite the process and accommodate as many applicants as possible. The week-long intake event included staff from multiple departments and was well received by County and State housing entities. The Rental Assistance Program distributed more than \$1.9 Million (approximately \$897,000 in CARES funds, \$804,000 in CRF funds and \$219,000 in SHIP funds) to

help Coral Springs residents and property owners. The Mortgage Assistance Program is still under review by HUD and expected to begin to distribute another \$733,552 during fall 2021.

The Code Compliance Unit began dual reporting to both the Police Department and Development Services Department. All Special Magistrate Hearings for code compliance except for Safety and Health violations were cancelled and compliance dates were extended by a Special Emergency Order thereby providing property owners more time for compliance and delaying fine accruals. Special Magistrate hearings were conducted via zoom to manage and escalate compliance on safety and health violations. Reduction cases were also conducted via zoom hearings to keep up with home sale demands so as not to delay property sales.

Enforcing County orders for business shutdowns was one of the most difficult aspects for Code Compliance Officers. The state determined a list of business types that were deemed non-essential and were required to close. It was the responsibility of the Code Compliance Officers in municipalities to monitor public complaints via Broward County's Dashboard to ensure businesses remained closed.

After the initial six weeks, businesses started reopening in phases of limited capacity and with new strict guidelines. Some of these guidelines included: enforcing mask-wearing, specific sanitization procedures, installation of plexiglass dividers, and tape applied to floors outlining social distancing measures of six feet. Some stores also applied directional arrows down aisles, so foot traffic patterns were better controlled.

Businesses were required to follow the guidelines and enforce them. If a business was deemed non-compliant, they could be subject to fines or closures. Broward County created a hotline for citizens to report non-compliant businesses. In June, Coral Springs entered into an agreement with Broward County to investigate and manage these complaints for businesses inside city boundaries. The County continued oversight on these investigations, business closures, and fining. In April of 2020, the Code Compliance team completed more than 7,200 inspections, which was almost four times their usual workload.

Non-COVID calls for service continued for Code Compliance with residents making complaints for a variety of infractions. Many of these complaints did not result in citations, as they were pandemic-related infractions. Examples included the increased signage at local businesses and recreational vehicles parked in front of residences, which often were being used to isolate or quarantine an infected family member.

Building Department

The Building Department's primary function is to review plans and inspect all construction to ensure compliance with the Florida Building Code and any other applicable construction requirements. While many local building departments were limiting their services in response to COVID, the City of Coral Springs Building Department continued to serve the community with exceptional service.

The Building Team quickly adapted to the closing of City Hall by installing a drop off/pick up station for all Building, Development Services, Engineering and Fire permitting needs. The dropped off documents were quarantined for 24 hours, before being handled by city staff. Despite the pandemic, the Building Team processed a record 11,240 permits during COVID in FY2020. The drop off/pick up station has become so popular with customers, that we have decided to make it a permanent option for customers.

The Building Department also worked closely with the IT Department to transition building staff to teleworking. Permitting and inspection processes were quickly transformed from a physical paper process to a virtual one. While working remotely from home, Plans Examiners reviewed over 27,000 electronic plans. Building continued offering construction meetings using Zoom. The Building Team continued having staff meetings using MS Teams. The department answered 52,841 phone calls and successfully scheduled over 29,000 inspections during COVID in FY2020. The Building Team also began utilizing a new software program which allowed the plans to be reviewed by architects, contractors, and inspectors in real-time, and provide feedback, keeping projects moving forward.

The implementation timeline for electronic plan review and permitting was accelerated due to the pandemic. In March of 2020, Building had only 5 permit types available for electronic review. By October 2020, all 208 permit types were available for electronic permitting. Over 3,000 permits were processed electronically during the pandemic in FY2020.

To keep our Building Inspectors and the public safe during the pandemic, the Building Department offered virtual inspections to homeowners and businesses in the city. Building Inspectors conducted over 31,000 inspections during COVID in FY2020. Virtual inspections were an important tool during the pandemic. The process will be added to the department Emergency Management Plan.

Parks and Recreation

With the closure of City parks and facilities, the Parks and Recreation Department took advantage of the situation and constructed some incredible enhancements. The gymnasium lobby and office were one of the greatest transformations, updating floors, paint, and customized wall graphics with photography from Coral Springs Parks along with digital enhancements, registration portals and class schedules available on television monitors. Additional Parks enhancements throughout the city included:

- Veterans Parks monument area was refreshed with new plant material.
- Mullins Park received new plant material throughout the park and at the Volunteer Building and Historical Museum. Additionally, old broken concrete parking stops were replaced with new recycled plastic stops in the Aiello Field and Mullins Pool parking lots. Collins and Heafy Fields were renovated.
- Restrooms were deep steam-cleaned at the American Little League, Mullins Hall, Mullins West, and Mullins East buildings.
- At Paul Britton Park, concrete curbs were installed around equipment and sidewalks as well as new wood fiber.

- The volleyball court at Fern Glen Park was rebuilt and curbed.
- Cypress Park received concrete pressure cleaning and turf field drains were deep cleaned and painted.
- Artificial turf was installed at the North Community Park and Cypress Park batting cages.
- Additionally, a long-awaited Park Ranger program was reinstated to give Parks employees the proper training and authority to keep disturbances to a minimum.

Prior to the pandemic, Parks staff initially started their day at one centralized location checking in and meeting to review each day's priorities and assignments. To reduce Parks staff from interacting in large numbers and maintaining social distancing, they now reported directly to their assigned park. To reduce wasted hours picking up and dropping off city vehicles, the vehicles were secured at each site. These changes have proven to be far more effective, identifying pandemic-related changes that then led to parks process improvements that would last long term.

The initial stay-at-home orders required the closure of public parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities. The city allowed "passive use," giving residents a chance to walk, run, or bike along the paths, but congregating in large numbers was prohibited. Most residents were pleased to have access, some continually pushed the envelope, requiring additional modifications to the parks such as removing basketball rims and swing seats.

4.7 FINANCIAL RESILIENCE, SUSTAINABILITY, AND RECOVERY

Financial Resilience, Recovery, and Sustainability became the mantra to ensure the City of Coral Springs did not suffer a financial crisis. A detailed COVID-19 Financial Recommendation document was developed by this Section and presented to the City Commission on May 15, 2020. The purpose of the Recommendation was to provide guidance regarding the financial and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

Objectives:

- Monitor economic conditions to forecast short-term and long-term planning
- Project revenue "at risk" to guide operational decisions
- Make recommendations to impose to offset revenues at risk - Identify expenses to lower overhead
- List cash availability in city reserves and fund balances
- Continue to request Hurricane Irma reimbursement from the State of Florida Emergency Management
- Prioritize projects from the city's Strategic Plan and devise the city's new phased City Work Plan until the city has recovered from the event
- Apply for additional grant opportunities
- Revisit grant awards not yet received to determine operational attainability
- Modify budget instructions for the FY2021 budget process

- Assess debt refunding opportunities to reduce annual debt service costs
- Investigate opportunities for borrowing to support future cash flow needs
- Partner with city's investment advisor to understand the liquidity in the city's portfolio and the timeframes required for drawdowns, if needed
- Partner with Director of Economic Development on a strategy to springboard the City of Coral Springs economy
- Track COVID-19 expenses for reimbursement

Foreseeing the impending economic turmoil, the city recognized the importance of conserving every operational dollar possible. The city was committed to protecting the safety, health and wellness of the residents while managing the COVID-19 pandemic. Actions were taken to cushion the impact to front-line services, the workforce, the residents, and businesses. Key expense reduction measures implemented to offset at risk revenues included:

- Reduction of General Fund expenses by 2% through essential hiring only and implementing strategic operational cuts.
- A one-time financial solution of holding the General Fund depreciation reimbursement to the Equipment Services Fund –to be replenished by offsetting closed out capital projects and increased reimbursements in future years.
- Review, re-prioritize, repurpose capital projects.
- If necessary, supplementing revenues from the city's Fund Balance reserve.

Each city department worked diligently collaborating with the Budget and Strategy team to create three budget scenarios for the next fiscal year starting October 2020. The first budget representing the previous year with no change, next a reduction of 2% and last a reduction of 5%. Each department would have to make difficult decisions about where to cut these funds. With the fiscal year ending in September, this incident would affect more than one budget year. Planning for 2020-2022 had to be altered.

By June 30, 2020, the projected loss of revenue was estimated at \$2.5 million. By fiscal year-end, September 30, 2020, the projected loss of revenue for the City of Coral Springs was estimated to be approximately \$5.9 million. Assumptions which drive this analysis:

- Non-essential businesses and city facilities remained closed through June.
- A limited capacity to re-open at 25% began on July 1, 2020.
- Not all local businesses resumed operations immediately and some did not re-open at all.
- State shared revenues were forecasted to decline more sharply in the future as revenues are typically received two-months in arrears.
- At least 95% of the outstanding property tax payments were received by April 15th, pursuant to the State's Emergency Order waiver, which extended the deadline for property tax payments from March 30, 2020, to April 15, 2020.

- Nearly 68% of the General Fund revenues were collected through the end of March. This is attributed to 95% of property tax revenues being collected.
- Approximately 38% of the budgeted sales tax revenues were collected as of March 2020. There was a slight delay which is typical every year around that period. Sales tax revenues are typically remitted two months later by the State of Florida. The current analysis assumes that sales tax revenues earned before the Executive Order would be received as expected for the next month. For the remaining four months of the current fiscal year, sales tax revenue losses were expected, and at minimum one quarter into the next fiscal year.

A reduction of income was not the only fiscal concern regarding the pandemic, but also an increase in costs relating to the virus. Public Safety and essential employees would need adequate PPE to keep basic services functioning, including masks, gloves, Tyvek suits, and surgical gowns. Additional supplies of cleaning agents, hand sanitizer and COVID-19 testing expenses all come at a cost. By October of 2020, additional PPE and cleaning expenses topped \$850K and reached \$1 million by the year's end.

In March 2020, the city received a much need reimbursement from Hurricane Irma of \$3.5 million with another \$1.67 million in August of 2020.

Finance

The Finance Department encompasses six divisions: accounting, payroll, accounts payable, purchasing, water billing, and central stores. An early priority was to ensure staff were cross trained in several disciplines to ensure continuity of operations and all staff began working remotely.

During normal times, established purchasing rules and regulations are in place to ensure any vendor interested can compete for the business and that the city receives the most competitive pricing. These processes can take time and during an emergency, time is limited. Under the city's Emergency Declaration, standard purchasing requirements were suspended allowing the city to purchase more expeditiously.

CARES Act

The Federal government created the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act providing \$150 billion of direct assistance to states, territories, and tribal governments. These monies were intended to help the financial strain all entities were experiencing as a result of the pandemic. The City of Coral Springs' allocation was \$5.78 million.

From the total CARES Act monies received, the city allocated \$1.7 million of these funds to be used for rental, utility, and small business assistance for those who have experienced a loss of income, reduction in hours, or unemployment as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, monies were provided to eligible residents for rent and past-due utilities starting April 1, 2020, through the month of December. Assistance was paid directly to the landlord/utility company and the assistance was limited to a maximum of \$10,000.

Staff from the Community Development Division assembled at the Coral Springs Gymnasium for one week to assist residents through this new, cumbersome, and extensive application process. By December 30, 2020, the city issued a total of \$1,704,062.47 in rental and utility assistance and \$556,000 to small businesses.

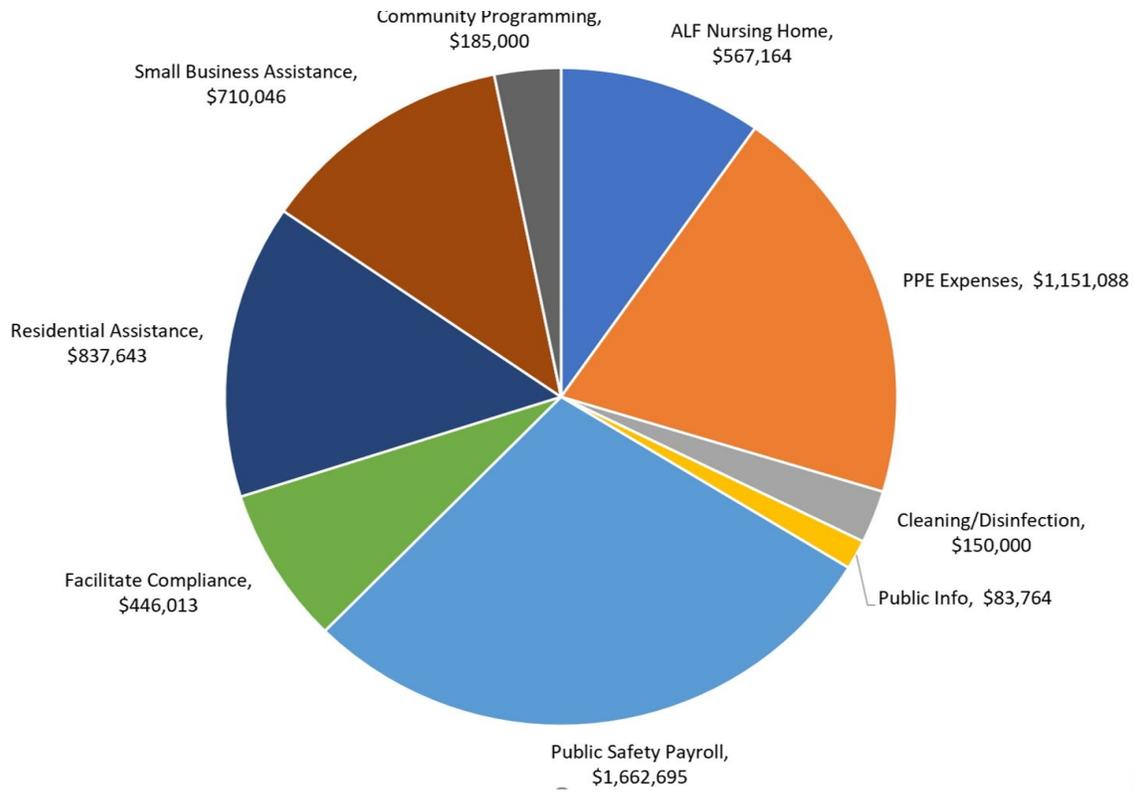
In January of 2021, the following timeline as well as an allocation, and expense summary by category was presented to the public and Coral Springs City Commission.

Timeline:

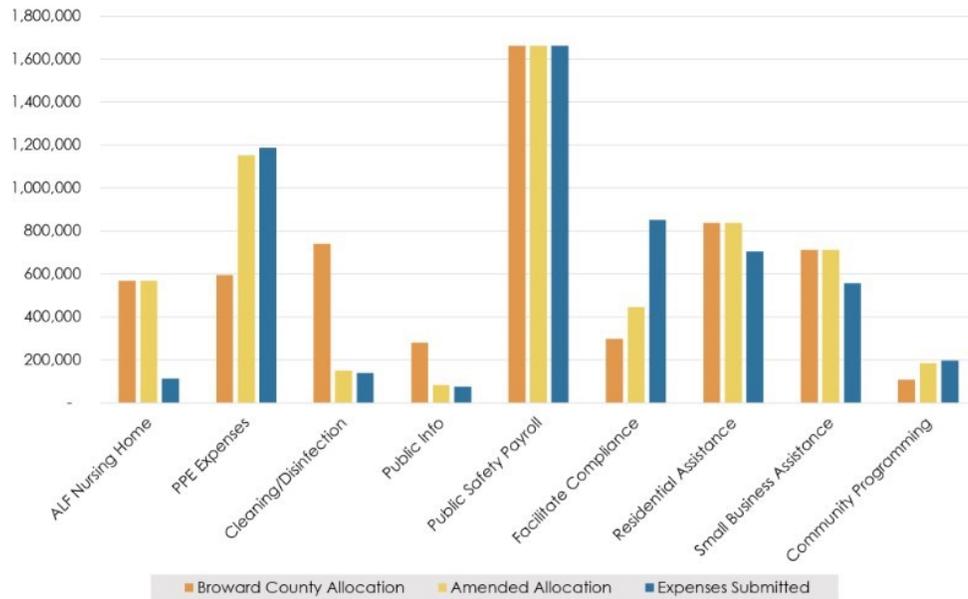
- March 27, 2020 - The CARES Act was signed by the President.
- June 16, 2020 - Broward County received \$340,744,702.
- The Broward City/County Management Association and Broward League of Cities agreed to apportion up to 30% of the monies for the 31 municipalities.
- August 25, 2020 – The Broward County Board of County Commissioners authorized the County Administrator to enter into a funding agreement with each city. The City of Coral Springs was allocated \$5,793,413.81.
- September 21, 2020 - The City of Coral Springs Commission approved the funding agreement with Broward County.
- October 21, 2020 - Broward County approved the City of Coral Springs Funding Agreement.
- December 10, 2020 – Request for reimbursement for the allocated funds completed and submitted to Broward County.
- The reimbursement process is expected to be complete in the second quarter of 2021.

Expenses were divided into nine categories of eligible reimbursement:

City of Coral Springs COVID-19 Historical Perspective



CARES Act Categories Allocation and Expense



Breakdown by Category

NOTE: Previously budgeted costs were not eligible.

Assisted Living Facility (ALF)/Nursing Home Monitoring

Funds were used to reimburse the city for monitoring nursing homes, ALFs, and adult day care facilities. The City of Coral Springs monitored 38 such facilities.

Broward County Allocation	Amended Allocation	Expenses Submitted
\$567,164	\$567,164	\$111,343

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Reimbursement of PPE purchases for city employees including safety glasses/goggles, face shields, face masks, partitions/physical barriers, gloves, gowns, sneeze screens, hand sanitizer, coveralls, gowns, hair covers, shoe covers, thermometers/temperature scanners, employee health screenings (i.e., COVID testing), and HEPA filter fans.

Broward County Allocation	Amended Allocation	Expenses Submitted
\$593,433	\$1,151,088	\$1,185,857

Cleaning and Disinfection

All-purpose cleaners, disinfectants, paper/hand towels, wipes, cleaning services, electrostatic cleaning services/products, necessary signage. Increased sanitation, and disinfection and cleaning of all municipal facilities including government buildings and government owned neighborhood facilities such as parks and playgrounds.

Broward County Allocation	Amended Allocation	Expenses Submitted
\$738,857	\$150,000	\$137,782

Public Information

Public information/awareness initiatives, COVID-related public awareness campaigns such as radio or television public service announcements, newspaper articles, print media (flyers, posters, postcards), and social media.

City of Coral Springs COVID-19 Historical Perspective

Broward County Allocation	Amended Allocation	Expenses Submitted
\$279,214	\$83,764	\$73,518

Public Safety Payroll

Police, Fire Rescue, and Code Enforcement payroll costs for COVID-19 related activities.

Broward County Allocation	Amended Allocation	Expenses Submitted
\$1,662,694	\$1,662,694	\$1,662,694

Facilitate Compliance

Telework and business distancing programs were vital to continuity of operations. Expenses related to this initiative included network upgrades, software licenses, laptops, associated hardware, additional closed captioning for virtual Commission meetings, remote user support, headsets, cameras for computers and other associated accessories.

Funds in this category were also used to reimburse for documented paid sick, family, and medical leave to enable compliance with COVID public health precautions and costs associated with quarantine for COVID-19 positive first responders.

Broward County Allocation	Amended Allocation	Expenses Submitted
\$296,716	\$446,013	\$851,076

Residential Assistance

This program provided rental assistance to eligible Coral Springs residents who experienced loss of income, reduction in hours, or unemployment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Assistance was provided for rent due beginning April 1, 2020, through the month of December. Assistance was paid directly to landlords and was limited to a maximum award of \$10,000. The program assisted 108 city residents.

Broward County Allocation	Amended Allocation	Expenses Submitted
\$837,643	\$837,643	\$704,048

Small Business Assistance

The “Back in Business” grant program assisted city businesses by providing grant opportunities specially designed to address their reopening needs during the pandemic. The primary purpose of the program was to ensure businesses were supported as the city navigated the reopening process. In total, financial assistance was provided to 251 city businesses.

The “COVID-19 Small Business Grant Program” assisted the city business community by providing grant opportunities designed to retain local jobs and provide sustainability for local businesses. This program assisted 61 eligible small businesses with a one-time grant of \$5,000.

Broward County Allocation	Amended Allocation	Expenses Submitted
\$710,045	\$710,045	\$557,196

Community Programming

Events and services coordinated by the City of Coral Springs utilized funds for the following:

- Broward County Department of Health COVID-19 testing support at Mullins Park and Panther’s Ice Den, including ancillary items and security.
- Hosted food drive/distribution at City Hall to support identified families in the community throughout the holidays.
- Seven Feeding South Florida food distribution events hosted at the Coral Square Mall with an average 700 families assisted weekly.
- Security at 22 food distributions at a local place of worship
- Police support at the city graduation parades for our five local high schools
- Police support at the free school lunch distribution at six schools over the summer
- Police presence at box stores located throughout the city.

Broward County Allocation	Amended Allocation	Expenses Submitted
\$107,643	\$185,000	\$196,744

[*Click here or scan QR Code for financial reports.](#)



4.8 PRIVATE BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE

The city is committed to assisting existing businesses and attracting new commerce to Coral Springs. As a result of the pandemic, it was paramount that the city offer assistance, information, and resources to the business community. The Private Business and Enterprise Section developed strategies to support businesses, which were focused on the overall economy for the city and partnered with the Chamber of Commerce and private enterprise.

The city developed new communication with a vast majority of businesses utilizing the business tax database, where information about Emergency Orders and opportunities were shared. In addition, the Economic Recovery Taskforce was developed with representation from the Chamber of Commerce and industry leaders. Keeping these business leaders informed and hearing their perspective of impacts related to COVID-19 helped the city develop new opportunities and lobby for support from elected officials.

Emergency Management and the Economic Development Office hosted a webinar for businesses to learn vital information about the virus and emergency preparedness. City staff helped businesses decipher best practices and provided signage and PPE supplies.

City leadership acknowledged the importance of connecting businesses to grant opportunities as unplanned expenses related to the pandemic mounted. A tremendous effort focused on applying for and distributing funding to assist businesses and residents in recovering from the economic impacts of COVID-19. Some of these programs include:

Give Where You Live Campaign

The city partnered with the Coral Springs Community Chest, a local charitable organization, to raise funds for temporary financial assistance through the "Give Where You Live" program. The goal was to raise money, which directly assisted Coral Springs residents through an application process. With the assistance of Communications and Marketing and Human Resources, the non-profit received and distributed \$30K in funds for rent, utilities, and other eligible expenses.

Bridge Loan

The Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program exists for small business owners located statewide that are experiencing economic damage because of COVID-19. These short-term, interest-free working capital loans are intended to "bridge the gap" between the time a major catastrophe hits and when a business has secured longer-term recovery resources, such as sufficient profits from a revived business, receipt of payments on insurance claims, or federal disaster assistance.

Back in Business Grant Program

The city created the Coral Springs Back in Business Grant Program to support the local business community with opportunities designed to address their reopening needs during Phase 1 of the COVID-19 crisis. The city allocated \$250,000 to award grants for \$1,000 each to small businesses within Coral Springs. The funds were transferred from the existing Business Incentive Program and Economic Development's operating budget. The grant program was made available to

businesses with more than three and less than 50 employees, via a simple application process, a current business tax license in Coral Springs, and no open code violations.

Connecting Small Business to Payroll Protection Program

The city implemented the Connecting Local Businesses to Grants and Loans program to mitigate the effect of the COVID-19 virus on local businesses by connecting participants to grant and loan opportunities. Since the program began, more than \$1.4 million in relief funds were dispersed to Coral Springs businesses. To date, 261 businesses have enrolled in the program and 109 completed the Hold Harmless Form, allowing us to provide the necessary support.

Personal Protective Equipment Distribution

The city, in partnership with the Coral Springs Chamber of Commerce and Broward Health Coral Springs, distributed 12,000 cloth masks, along with important safety information and hand sanitizer to local businesses for their employees and customers, ensuring they are safe and compliant with CDC guidelines before Phase 1 reopening.

Added Marketing

The Communications and Marketing Department engaged residents to post their favorite local restaurant on social media and listed local restaurants offering takeout and delivery online. The team created email communication campaigns directed to businesses registered with Coral Springs, providing valuable updates about programming and funding opportunities.

COVID-19 Testing

In May 2020, in partnership with United Clinical Laboratory, Coral Springs offered polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing for employees of private businesses. Initiated by an online registration, businesses could set up an account and shareable link for employees. Located at Sportsplex Park, participants would drive up for their swab and received results within 24 hours. Additional testing would be provided to employee families upon a positive test. By request, businesses and organizations needing mass testing were provided at the business location.

Expansion of Online Services

The city expanded online submittals for planning and zoning, as well as paint color applications. Staff allowed for emailing of the Development Review Committee submittals and plans, while the Building Division continued permit inspections for commercial business and coordinated with contractors to accept plans and blueprints for construction projects. This online resource was instrumental to ensuring business development continued throughout the pandemic.

Cares Act Funding Allocation

The city applied for and was awarded \$750,000 from the CARES Act to support small businesses. Businesses could apply for up to \$5,000 for lease or mortgage payments, staff payroll, utilities, insurance, inventory, and business supplies.

Economic Recovery Taskforce

The taskforce was developed to discuss strategies, which helped businesses prepare for reopening, connect businesses with goods and services, and ensure the recovery and

sustainability of the local economy. The task force is comprised of the Mayor, select city staff, business and industry leaders, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Economic Recovery Taskforce Members

- Scott Brook, Mayor
- Frank Babinec, City Manager
- Melissa Heller, Deputy City Manager
- Kristi Bartlett, Director of Economic Development
- Alex Falcone, Director of Emergency Management, City Security, Special Events
- Catherine Givens, Director of Budget, and Strategy
- Kim Moskowitz, Director of Finance
- Lynne Martzall, Director of Communications & Marketing
- Cindy Brief, President and CEO, Coral Springs Coconut Creek Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Andrea Jacobs, Brodzki Jacobs
- John Biggie, JB Management and Maintenance
- Jeff Burnett, Coral Square Mall
- Kevin O'Connor, Runyon's Restaurant
- Ray Carballo, Bluestream
- Roy Gold, Cambridge Diagnostic Products
- Hilton Goldstein, Hilton Software
- Dyan Harpest, Dyan's Country Kitchen
- Tim Hogans, FPL
- Rick Langnas, United Medco
- Antonio Milian, Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital
- Bernie Moyle, Cal-Vegas LTD.
- Juan Noguerras, Cleveland Clinic
- Gisele Rahael, Amera Corporation
- Michael Rahael, Amera Corporation
- Ron Renzy, Wallberg & Renzy, PA
- Alex Rudolph, Tap42
- Kendra Salerno, CenterState Bank
- Jared Smith, Broward Health Coral Springs
- Barry Spiegel, Amerimax Investments

4.9 LEGAL/CITY CLERK

Traditionally tasked with the continuity of government during a crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic required the Office of the City Attorney and City Clerk to implement new procedures for transparency of public meetings, while adhering to Sunshine Laws. Moreover, the dissection and clarification of Emergency Orders issued by government entities and development of city Emergency Orders proved instrumental in informing the public, staff, and City Commission throughout the pandemic.

The City Attorney stated that "Declaring the State of Emergency and moving decision making into the hands of the experts was possibly one of the most important decisions made at the start of the pandemic. Taking it off the Commission and moving it to the City Manager and the Director of Emergency Management, these professionals are trained and credentialed for events like this."

Beginning in March 2020, Coral Springs converted City Commission meetings to a virtual format. Every effort was made to ensure State law and local ordinances related to accessibility and public comment were met. Meetings were broadcast live through several social media outlets, CityTV (a dedicated cable channel for the city), and city radio. Residents were given access to public comment through a Call Center or could participate virtually by submitting a public comment form. In addition to having a myriad of virtual access, residents, could view the meeting via CityTV on an iPad provided outside City Hall. Meeting agendas and minutes were also available to the public by request via an online portal.

Public records requests were moved to a virtual platform and managed by the Clerk's Office. Incoming mail and packages underwent an isolation period and to reduce exposure to the clerk staff, a pick-up procedure was implemented at City Hall.

5.0 PROTECTING THE WORKFORCE

Protecting the workforce from contracting or spreading the virus was vital to keeping city operations running. To alleviate the concerns of leave time and to promote transparency regarding symptoms or exposure to illness, the city provided additional COVID-19 sick leave for anyone who contracted the illness or had symptoms. At the onset of the pandemic, public testing was not easily accessible and providing testing to exposed employees was crucial to their well-being and that of their families. Developing solutions for testing, learning the process of contact tracing, and creating innovative solutions to ensuring the safety of the workforce was a top priority.

Immediately daily health screenings for employees were implemented. A representative from respective department(s) or a reassigned employee, staffed a screening station at facility entrances. Staff were responsible for administering temperature checks, screening for symptoms,

and logging that person into the building – ensuring easier contact tracing should an employee become ill.

The Safety and Health Team managed COVID-19 positive cases and potentially exposed employees and their family members. This began with employee testing, isolation, and quarantine mandates as well as contact tracing. This process helped manage illness, family exposure, and ensured consistency for return-to-work protocols.

If an employee fell ill or had an exposure to someone who confirmed positive, the employee was responsible for contacting their assigned Safety Officer to determine the next steps. If an employee was exhibiting symptoms, they were scheduled for immediate testing which took place daily at 8:00 a.m. Tested employees were not permitted inside city facilities and were directed to isolate at home while awaiting test results.

The city contracted with United Clinical Laboratory for employee COVID-19 testing. The lab provided results within 24-hours. The rapid turnaround alleviated the additional stress caused by the threat of the virus for employees and their families. During a time of limited testing availability, this resource was instrumental in the health of our workforce physically and mentally.

If an employee tested positive, they would immediately quarantine and work with a Safety Officer on contact tracing to identify and inform other individuals who may have been exposed. The Safety Officer Handbook, located in the Resources Section, was developed to reinforce continuity of the Safety Officer Program. Throughout the pandemic, Safety Officers were instrumental in assisting employees around the clock, to aid them with testing, and providing them with compassionate support.

In July of 2020, the city contracted with a local hotel to assist employees who were not able to safely separate from other household members. The hotel provided grocery delivery options as well as laundry services giving employees and their families additional support.

Testing those who were symptomatic or exposed to the virus was only one side of containment. Initially, it was believed that an asymptomatic carrier could spread the virus up to two weeks ahead of demonstrating symptoms. Leadership believed adding antibody testing for all workers could help reduce the spread and proactively identify asymptomatic carriers.

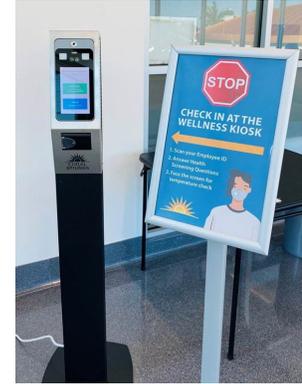
Return to work protocols were written jointly by Incident Command, the Safety and Health Team, and the city's Medical Director using the most current CDC guidelines.

Health Screening Kiosks

In January 2021, the city purchased and installed 11 health screening kiosks, which reduced staff hours and automated the health screening process. Employees would scan their city issued ID badge, answer a short health questionnaire, and receive a temperature check. The system registered this information, which allowed for easier contact tracing in the event of exposure at a facility.

Consistent with the prior employee supervised check-in process; if an employee had a temperature reading that exceeded acceptable thresholds of over 99.9^o Fahrenheit, they were not to enter the building. The kiosk notifies the employee to depart the premises and it contacts a supervisor and Health & Safety Officer.

Eleven kiosks along with software and stands were purchased with Cares Act funding totalling \$44,378.



5.1 POLICIES & PROCESSES FOR WORKFORCE REALLOCATION

Human Resources developed policies and processes to allow for telework, tracking of payroll hours, and equipment. Family leave policies for illness or childcare issues were modified and access to employee 401K funds was made possible for employees experiencing financial hardship due to out of work family members.

In addition to these many initiatives, Human Resources continued the process for essential hiring. The department created virtual formats to recruit and hire. Listed are the steps in the recruitment process that had to be modified:

- Leveraging the Neogov recruitment management solution to facilitate the applicant intake process and review of qualified applicants.
- Supplemented the existing phone screening process, with the additional use of video screening tools to conduct a virtual interview.
- Use of audio conference and video conference tools to conduct virtual panel interviews and staff round table introductions.
- Continued leveraging online background check services to facilitate the clearance of finalists.
- Utilizing a modified in-person computerized voice stress analysis testing to support safe distances for public safety applicants.
- Continued delivering offer letters and applicant correspondence through email and leveraged electronic sign-off.

[*Click here or scan QR Code for policies and processes for Workforce Reallocation.](#)



5.2 MENTAL WELLNESS INITIATIVES

Working virtually for many is an isolating experience, especially under pandemic conditions. For many the fear of illness and new way of life created an additional layer of depression and anxiety, which was a concern for leadership who now had reduced face time with their employees. Leaders needed to be creative in reaching out and creating opportunities to lift-up their staff. These methods were praised by employees during the interview sessions.

Acknowledging and managing wellness to include medical and emotional well-being has been an active city initiative for several years. The city is committed to ensuring employees and their families are supported, and acknowledges PTSD, anxiety, and depression are common conditions experienced by first responders as well as civilians. The following expanded mental health benefits and resources are evidence of this commitment to employees:

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides unlimited confidential free sessions with a licensed clinician throughout the year.
- Work/Life support such as elder care, childcare, and pet care, financial assistance, legal assistance.
- No co-payments for mental wellbeing services.
- Breaking the stigma: leadership spoke to their own personal struggles that included abuse, anxiety, and depression in a panel discussion and Q&A.
- Behavioral and substance abuse recovery facilities that focus on first responders.
- Expanded emotional debriefing following traumatic calls for service.
- Implemented a chaplaincy outreach program.
- Employee wellbeing webinars which included stress relief, healing after trauma, suicide prevention, and self-care.
- Fire Department plans for expansion of peer support program identifying employees with positive connections among peers and expanded counseling training.
- Expansion of the clinician program of preselected psychologists and counselors who are provided with additional training to better connect and relate to the challenges first responders face.

All of this is part of the city's Behavioral Health Access Program (BHAP) which was planned to be implemented throughout the organization prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

*For additional information about the city's BHAP services and program, visit coralspringsstrong.org.

Daily communications issued by the City Manager helped employees feel connected and cared for as he expressed concern for employees and their families.

At the onset, the Human Resources Department sent expanded contact information for each of their staff members to each department lead. This involved telephone numbers, names, and addresses to ensure each one was checked on by their supervisor regularly.

Human Resources also celebrated employee birthdays in a new virtual format, extending well wishes via email. One department held weekly “moan and groan” sessions that simply gave employees an hour to talk through the struggles of working at home amid the pandemic. This helped those who were now balancing the additional workload of homeschooling children and all the homelife challenges that came with the pandemic.

Human Resources utilized Workplace by Facebook to help employees stay connected. Employees were invited to participate in weekly wellness challenges that focused on mindfulness, physical activity, and nutrition. These activities provided options to help relieve stress and improve self-care.

For some, working more hours and not creating time for a mental break can lead to burnout. Employees expressed having a difficult time processing the massive change and hardship of the pandemic and disconnecting from work. The City Manager encouraged senior management to take two meaningful disconnecting breaks per day i.e., 15 minutes to walk or meditate. This was passed down to all city staff.

5.3 SKILLS ASSESSMENT FOR EMPLOYEES

City leadership was committed to ensuring all staff remained engaged and productive despite the partial shutdown or closure of some city-work locations. Both full-time and part-time/temporary employees were utilized to take on new work assignments in several departments who were struggling to keep up with emerging COVID responsibilities. Human Resources worked closely with department heads to ensure those who could continue working were re-assigned and compensated for their efforts. Employees were adaptable and willingly agreed to working outside their normal classification to support the organization. While many local cities began closing operations, furloughing employees, and initiating layoff processes, Coral Springs found innovative ways to re-deploy workers, keeping more than 200 employees actively employed. Human Resources established an electronic skills assessment to help employees who were unable to take on telework assignments to self-identify skills that they possessed which could be put to use in other ways. The survey included background information on education, certifications, and select job skills that would enable employees to contribute to emerging projects. Employees quickly responded to the survey which enabled them to be reassigned. Employees who were eligible for re-assignment sustained operations in functional areas outside their own department:

- Passport Service Representatives supported the Health & Safety team by facilitating daily health screenings and temperature checks for employees reporting to select city facilities.
- Lifeguards supported the ICS Logistics branch by delivering personal protective equipment and other supplies to fire stations and other city work locations.
- Parks and Recreation employees from various divisions helped initiate a new Park Ranger program to support monitoring parks usage in the city's 49 parks.
- Parks and Recreation staff supported the Food for the Soul team, delivering meals to residents who were food insecure and unable to participate in the city's drive thru distribution.

- Employees from multiple city departments supported the Emergency Management team with tracking and managing critical incident data for essential reporting.
- Employees from multiple city departments provided frontline support at the food distribution site, assisting with setup, traffic control, food distribution and breakdown.
- Parks and Recreation and Public Works employees assisted with projects to improve facilities and public facilities that were temporarily closed.
- Code Compliance Officers were assigned to the ICS Public Safety branch and assisted with outreach and communication to local business to ensure compliance with emergency executive orders and other safety and health protocols.

[*Click here or scan QR Code for access to Skills Assessment](#)



6.0 PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE: ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES

The City of Coral Springs issued Emergency Order 2020-01, on March 17, 2020, adopting Florida Department of Emergency Management Emergency Order 20-002. The order required each ALF and nursing home to submit an affidavit confirming their compliance with orders that confirmed proper personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff, employee wellness screening and reporting of possible virus infection within the facility on a weekly basis.

The Fire Rescue Department established a team to develop plans to protect this vulnerable demographic. Staff from the Fire Department and Code Compliance contacted these facilities to find out about PPE levels and helped submit request for PPE, contacted facilities regarding the number of confirmed cases at facilities and offered free webinars for ways to ensure the health and welfare of the residents. When PPE orders for the senior facilities were delayed, the city provided the necessary equipment and assisted the facilities with COVID-19 related cases they were managing.

On July 7, 2020, the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) issued an Emergency Order requiring the testing of all ALF and nursing home staff every two weeks. The City of Coral Springs amended Emergency Order 2020-01 requiring ALFs and nursing homes to submit documentation every two weeks following, confirming they are following the AHCA Order. As COVID-19 vaccines became available, the fire department provided assistance to the ALFs and nursing homes to have their residents and staff vaccinated.

The city's efforts in enforcing orders to protect the most vulnerable were critical in saving lives. While other cities, counties and states experienced overwhelming numbers of people who lived in ALF's and nursing homes perish to the COVID-19 virus, Coral Springs made the safety and wellness of the most vulnerable in our community the greatest priority.

[*Click here or scan QR Code for Assisted Living Facilities Response Timeline.](#)



7.0 FEEDING THE COMMUNITY

The City of Coral Springs was committed to meeting the needs of the community throughout the pandemic. As unemployment numbers rose because of safer at home orders and forced business closures, the City Commission and staff felt strongly about the importance of developing a solution to food insecurity for residents.

Initially, the Clergy Coalition of Coral Springs was contacted but due to a lack of food donations, the fear of the illness, and further community spread, they were unable to organize and strategize a food distribution plan. The city decided to implement an internal solution, assembling a team led by the Community Relations section. This team consisted of members from several departments including Human Resources, Police and Emergency Management. The newly formed team branded themselves, "Food for the Soul," and reached out to non-profit organizations who specialized in mass food distribution. Their research and contacts led them to Feeding South Florida, the region's leading domestic hunger-relief organization, who agreed to work with Coral Springs to distribute groceries to families in need.

Food distributions nationwide and locally reported long lines and traffic concerns, which needed to be addressed ahead of hosting a mass distribution. The team identified the Coral Square Mall, which was closed due to emergency mandates, as the ideal location to safely meet the needs of the community. Coral Square Mall, managed by Simon Properties, signed an agreement with the city authorizing the use of their expansive parking lot.

The first distribution was held on April 14, 2020 and ran for seven consecutive weeks. The distribution, powered by a team of 55-65 city employee volunteers, distributed approximately a week's worth of groceries to 700-900 families each week.

At the conclusion of the first distribution, process improvements to accommodate waste collection and restrooms for volunteer use were determined. Waste Pro, the city's solid waste contract provider, donated a rear loader to manage the waste on-site. Sears, located on the mall property, generously allowed volunteers to use their restrooms and a place to cool down.

Another challenge quickly realized was supplying food to residents with extraordinary circumstances who were physically unable to visit the location for pick-up. The team identified these families and organized with Parks and Recreation employees to provide home deliveries.

As the city transitioned into the first phase of reopening, food distribution was shifted to two local religious organizations, powered by Feeding South Florida and the Simply Fresh Farmers to Families Grant program, both providing weekly distributions.

With events and gatherings still not available due to community spread of the virus, the Food for the Soul team hosted the city's 57th birthday celebration as a drive-up and drop-off food donation event. Volunteers collected three truckloads of food which was delivered to churches in Coral Springs for distribution.

For the Thanksgiving and December holidays, the city coordinated the purchase of food to feed additional Coral Springs families through CARES Act funding. Families were once again identified

by the Food for the Soul team, and city volunteers ensured distribution to more than 350 families during each distribution.

8.0 THE SECRET: HIGHLY MOTIVATED EMPLOYEES

At the City of Coral Springs employees are expected to contribute to a positive work environment by complying with all policies, practices, and procedures. Employees are expected to work as a proactive team to achieve the city's **vision**, **mission**, and **core values**, as well as departmental and city-wide goals and objectives.

Vision: To be the premier community in which to live, work and raise a family.

Mission: To provide an innovative, sustainable, high-performing organization that strives to make decisions and measure progress based on economic, social, and environmental factors improving the quality of life for the residents, businesses, and visitors of the diverse community we serve.

Core Values: T.R.A.I.L.S

Teamwork

Respect

Accountability

Innovation

Leadership

Superior Service (Customer-Centric)

When the consultant working on this document interviewed city employees, the following words were commonly used to describe the workforce:

Problem Solvers * Honesty * Integrity * Ambitious * Innovative * Reliable * Responsible

Why do Coral Springs employees go above and beyond?

The city employs 853 full-time and over 200 part-time staff, all of which are essential to the effective and efficient operations of the City of Coral Springs.

From recruiting the right people, proactive thinking, emphasis on planning, the development of creative solutions, internal communication, training, and recognition - the city is committed to creating a highly motivated workforce.

The value of a dedicated, honest, and ambitious workforce is immeasurable. There are many industries created around employee development because cultivating and motivating employees is oftentimes the key to success. The goal of recruiting and retaining the right people remains a top priority in Coral Springs and this was evident in the response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The City of Coral Springs has a long-standing reputation for employing a workforce of problem-solvers and solutions-based thinkers. As with most municipal government organizations, the city

employs a vast number of positions: maintenance workers, engineers, parks and recreation coordinators, lifeguards, accountants, lawyers, police officers, firefighters, paramedics, doctors, event planners, creators, and administrative support. Employees in Coral Springs have a variety of personalities, cultures, backgrounds, and educational levels, but regardless of the many complexities within the workforce, their mission remains consistent: passion and commitment to the community.

As a result of employee and departmental interviews, it was determined that this level of commitment was a benefit to navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. City leadership indicated that the crisis created stronger bonds among an already unified workforce.

Meeting with the Workforce

In October 2020, a Project Consultant was contracted to assist the city in the development of this document, meeting with more than 140 employees, City Commissioners and local business leaders to ascertain their perspective about the city's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal was to gather as much data as possible and document the challenges, solutions, successes, and lessons learned. Equally important, was to identify areas where the organization and its members could improve for a future crisis of this nature.

Employees who participated in the focus groups represented every tier of the workforce, including frontline, middle management, and senior leadership. The Project Consultant, who works with cities all over the country, observed a motivation that he believes is unique and extremely uncommon in most municipal government organizations. He states, "The unexpected pattern uncovered was the passion, commitment, and desire to constantly 'do better' which came pouring out of all employees who participated in the interview process. Across departments, employees were working excessive hours, some seven-days a week with little downtime, yet few expressed frustrations, rather a sense of 'being' part of something larger than oneself."

The Project Consultant dug deeper, intent on revealing the secrets to building a highly motivated workforce. To better understand their commitment to excellence and dedication to service, he implemented a series of specifically pointed questions. When asked why employees went to such levels to achieve goals, a majority of employee response was silence. However, a brave few would speak up and offer "it's our job" or "people depend on us."

For the Project Consultant, these truthful, yet generic responses of, "I don't want to let my teammates down" or "Coral Springs strives to do the best" was indicative of something greater. With 30 years of executive coaching and team development, he wanted to crack the employee motivational code and asked, "But, why?"

Many who participated in the interviews had a difficult time understanding what was being asked of them because the city's unique culture was all they had known, and they are deeply dedicated to it. When each day is started with a common goal, leaders support the workforce, honesty is rewarded, innovation is praised and good work is incentivized, there is no need to question why they do the job they were hired to do.

As the week of interviews continued, several foundational elements were revealed to depict how Coral Springs successfully cultivated a motivated workforce. The Project Consultant provided valuable insight detailed below to include the following factors exhibited leading to a highly effective and motivated workforce.

Secret 1: Hire the Right People

Hiring the right people is the first step in creating a motivated workforce. The city is proud of its efforts to support diversity with the hiring of employees that are representative of the community. Coral Springs has a reputation for being a great employer, and because of that, many candidates are drawn to the organization. The city looks for employees who have passion for excellent customer service, commitment to public service, and a desire to constantly improve. Willing to take the time to seek the absolute best candidates, the city has at times elected to abandon a course, begin again, and continue the search. Over the years they have developed a thorough process of selecting the best employees from pre-screening to interviews and final choices. The following section has been outlined to include the best hiring practices by Coral Springs Human Resource Department.

Everything starts with setting the right expectations. First, employment advertisements should be clear and concise and include a true description of job duties, environment, and pay; applicants should know exactly what the position entails. Enhancing or elaborating the duties of a position to be more enticing than reality only sets both parties up for failure.

Coral Springs uses Neogov recruitment management solution to facilitate the applicant intake process and review of qualified applicants as well as the use of video screening tools to help get to know candidates before inviting them to a virtual interview. This process is a supplement to the existing phone screening process. The use of audio conference and video conference tools to conduct virtual panel interviews and round table staff introductions have been especially helpful for hiring especially since the Coronavirus pandemic has driven much of the workforce into a virtual setting.

During the interview process, the Human Resources Team asks questions centered around the city's Core Values to help applicants express how they personally align with them and whether these values resonate. Additionally, HR seeks to expose applicants to as much about the city and the role during the interview process – dubbed a realistic job preview. This transparent strategy gives the applicant a better understanding of the culture of the city and fewer surprises down the road.

The Core Values were established by City leadership and are functioning principles designed to motivate and lead the workforce into a customer service-centric culture.

*Full detail of the Coral Springs Core Values can be found in the Resources Section.

Secret 2: Let go of the Wrong People

In conjunction with hiring the right people, letting go individuals who do not align with the organizations core values is essential.

When supervisors were asked "Why does Coral Springs have so many highly motivated employees" a popular response was "people who are not on the same level don't last." Managers and Directors credited Human Resources, and the ability to let go of the wrong people. If an employee does not demonstrate an alignment of core values, management allows for terminations. Coaching and additional training are first offered but if an employee is still not meeting the needs of the position, they are not retained. For government employers city or otherwise, this is seldom the case.

Directors and supervisors in Coral Springs are committed to develop their employees into a premier team, by continually coaching, training, and supporting an employee culture that continually works towards excellence. When a passion for excellence is not expressed, they are willing to let them go and look for the right person for the position.

Secret 3: Create a Culture of Care

Basic psychology principles tell us that motivation increases as needs are met. Growth does not stem from a lack of something, rather from a desire. When the needs of the employees are being reasonably satisfied, motivation grows.

The City of Coral Springs provides a competitive salary, retirement plans, tuition assistance, health, dental, life, and disability insurance offerings that are competitive with other municipalities of its size and tax base. Other opportunities within the organization allow for career growth, continued education, and professional development. Furthermore, during this timeframe, many in the private industry, as well as other nearby government organizations, were losing their jobs or furloughed. Coral Springs leaders adhered to an early declared statement of no layoffs. Standing by this promise, leaders reassigned employees whose positions were unable to continue in the new format and shifted them into other deeply needed duties. Without fear of job loss or income, motivation grew. The city values employees because of their skills, not their position. Due to this, staff was reallocated to assist with job duties that increased due to the pandemic.

Cities and other organizations may say they care about their employees, but employees need to see it demonstrated. Repeatedly during the focus groups, employees stated "The city cares about its employees." Without hesitation, the City of Coral Springs kept employees engaged, and actively working for the community during the pandemic.

In addition to employee physical health benefits, Coral Springs also provides robust mental health support. For several years, leaders added mental health and wellness programs to reach employees who are in need. In 2019, Human Resources hosted a panel discussion where executive leadership shared their own experiences dealing with trauma, anxiety, and chronic depression. The city also offers a Behavioral Health Access Program (BHAP) to help reach

employees who may be experiencing mental health challenges, substance addictions, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Critical Incident Stress Debriefings are provided for Public Safety personnel following traumatic calls for service.

Secret 4: Create a Culture of Belonging

The City of Coral Springs has created a culture of belonging and development of interpersonal relationships, which motivates individuals to be part of a team, group, or family. A team mentality is achieved when members do not want to let one another down. A team that has a common goal to work towards can build friendship, trust, and acceptance. Knowing others depend on your contributions adds accountability and pride in service.

The city continually reaffirms their commitment to the Vision Statement "To be the premier community in which to live, work, and raise a family." Employees are expected to "Serve with Excellence, Innovation, and Integrity." Consistently focusing on the vision reinforces the organization's priorities.

Coral Springs also builds this culture of belonging by letting every employee know the city is only as strong as its weakest link. They are presented with the challenge that every employee needs to step up and be strong for the next person continually on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis. The message of learning and growing together is shared over and over with the employees.

Belonging to this team has many benefits. Employees consistently lean on each other and ask for help. No one person or department can singularly run the city. Employees feel supported and confident in asking for help from supervisors and team members. City events are a great example of how employee teams unite for the greater good. Events such as parades, concerts, and festivals require representation spanning across every department. Events staff lay down the research and planning and rely on teams from many departments to supply additional staffing. It takes more than 100 employees and volunteers to execute a community event with a major contribution from Parks and Recreation, Facilities, Public Safety, Emergency Management, and multiple other departments city-wide. This 'all hands-on deck' mentality is one of the greatest reasons that Coral Springs has award-winning and innovative community events. Employees city-wide are encouraged to connect with the community by volunteering to serve at events outside their normal work responsibilities. The "Engaging Employees through Volunteerism" policy was created in 2018 to afford full-time employees up to 2 hours of volunteer paid leave each bi-weekly payroll to give back to Coral Springs.

[* Click here or scan QR Code for Engaging Employees through Volunteerism policy.](#)



Secret 5: Create a Culture of Recognition

A common belief among employees is that money may be the number one motivator. Money is perhaps the most frequently used, however, money is a temporary motivator. While income and benefits are an important part of employee satisfaction and retention, an important motivator is recognition and achievement.

Consistent leadership feedback is vital for employees to earn achievement and recognition. Many organizations miss these opportunities to build an effective and motivated workforce. Too often employers only give negative feedback when an employee does something bad or wrong or makes a mistake. While addressing mistakes is important, highlighting areas of excellence helps to model correct methods, leading employees to better work product and achievement. When a leader only gives negative feedback, they are going against the number one and number two best motivators.

Coral Springs demonstrates recognition to employees in a variety of ways. Supervisors realize that regular supportive feedback is paramount to driving the right results. Recognizing outstanding effort through these recognition programs build self-esteem and drive employees to a higher level of engagement. Annual performance reviews include individual and team goal setting, reinforcement of key competencies (city's core values) and a development plan the employee and supervisor agree upon. The annual review process reinforces the importance of having goals that are aligned with the city's mission and vision and recognize employees who consistently go above and beyond to deliver excellent results while exemplifying the city's core values.

To support and encourage employees throughout COVID-19, new recognition programs emerged to demonstrate the importance of One Team – One Mission. Employees who were engaged in response to the community were awarded additional time off. Leave policies were re-evaluated and temporary changes were made to remove balance limits that were previously enforced at the start of each calendar year. Additionally, letters of commendation were issued to all employees and department directors supported the delivery of COVID-19 challenge coins to every employee. In lieu of hosting a holiday group gathering, employees were provided the option of ordering a "free" take-out lunch from a pre-determined selection of local businesses during a specified week in December. Other celebrations included a virtual "administrative professional" and "employee appreciation" day where employees were entered into multiple random drawings and received door-prizes, gift-cards and additional paid time-off.

Core Values: Teamwork, Respect, Accountability, Innovation, Leadership, and Superior Service.

Apart from supervisor encouragement, verbal expression of appreciation, and goal setting, there are several ways peers and management can officially show recognition. Internal Bright Spot and Shining Star recognition programs give instant gratification with gift cards or an opportunity to be included in a quarterly drawing for a cash award. Also, an annual Employee Quality Excellence Awards celebration is paired with a Chili Cook-Off event. The Employee Quality Excellence Awards is a peer-nomination process where individuals who consistently live

out the city's values are celebrated and rewarded for their dedication to the organization. All recognition programs and the annual performance review process were designed to reward behaviors which sustain the culture and reinforce why our vision, mission and core values are important.

The City of Coral Springs has made it a priority to recognize the achievements of its employees. This creates an incredible culture of recognition that then supports employee retention, a high sense of belonging and a desire to be fully engaged in our vision.

One Word

At the end of each employee session, the project consultant concluded the focus groups by asking participants to identify one word that defines the city's actions throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The list below demonstrates the pride of each participant

- Adaptable
- Bonded
- Committed
- Compassionate
- Consistency
- Crisis
- Dedicated
- Family
- Flexible
- Hardworking
- Helpful
- Innovative
- Leadership
- Like-minded
- Prepared
- Proactive
- Quality
- Recognition
- Resilient
- Respected
- Selflessness
- Teamwork
- Together
- United

9.0 EVENTS REIMAGINED

The City of Coral Springs is known for its fun, family-friendly events held regularly throughout the year. Due to the pandemic, many City sponsored, or City hosted events had to be postponed or cancelled. As it became clear this pandemic would not be resolved soon, the city needed a solution to reimagine events and celebrations to create memorable experiences in a new and safe format shifting from in-person events to creative technology and drive-by celebrations.

This list of events and activities were reimaged with the support of City staff and volunteers included:

May 7, 2020 *National Day of Prayer* *Livestream*

A designated youth representative from each congregation delivered a brief prayer on behalf of their religious community focused on our leaders, nation, and world peace.

June 3, 4, 5, 2020 *High School Graduation* *Parade*

Graduation drive-by parades for local high schools to honor the graduating class of 2020. All participants were required to remain in their vehicles and practice social distancing.

June 19, 2020 *Juneteenth Celebration* *Livestream*

A virtual celebration in honor of Juneteenth, a day that symbolizes the abolition of slavery in the United States of America. The commemoration included a wide range of celebratory performances, literature, spoken word, guest speakers and a special message from the Coral Springs City Commission. Broadcasted live or aired pre-recorded on CityTV.

July 4, 2020 *Independence Day Parade* *Parade & Livestream*

A 40-mile parade route in honor of American Independence. Downsized from the typical full-fledged Fourth of July Celebration in a city park, the city festively decorated city vehicles representing each department that drove through 11 Coral Springs communities spanning across the city. Live streamed on the city's Facebook, YouTube Channel and on CityTV. This allowed the city to bring the festivities directly to residents.

September 11, 2020 *9/11 Virtual Ceremony* *Limited In-Person & Livestream*

Members of the City Commission, Coral Springs Police and Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department honored victims and heroes of the 9/11 attacks, by airing a pre-recorded ceremony. This began with the traditional wreath laying at the 9/11 Monument at the Northwest Regional Library. Maintaining six feet of distance, residents and their families were invited to pay their respects at the monument throughout the day on September 11th.

October 10, 2020 *Far Out Flicks Drive-In Movie* *Socially Distanced Outdoors*

A socially distanced 2-night event celebration with residents inside their vehicles, 'Far Out Flicks' Drive-In Movie Night honored the Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department's 50th Anniversary. The feature film, *Playing with Fire* also included a cameo video message from the film's lead actor, John Cena who congratulated Coral Springs and thanked them for their service. Attendees

City of Coral Springs COVID-19 Historical Perspective

received gift bags that included challenge coins. Concession included mobile ordering and delivery to each car. A portion of the proceeds benefitted the Coral Springs Professional Firefighters Benevolent Association, a non-profit organization.

October 25, 2020 Monster Splash Socially Distanced, Outdoors

This two-day socially distanced city event was held at a city pool with a large waterslide. Guests were required to wear masks when outside of the pool water, and enjoyed a Halloween decorated pool deck with opportunity for dancing at limited capacity. The event allowed for 80 preregistered guests in 2-hour pool sessions.

October 31, 2020 Cops and Kids, Trick or Treat Drive-through

The Coral Springs Police, and Coral Springs FOP Lodge 87, and the City of Coral Springs worked to create an event that reimagined the traditional "Trick or Treat" activities. This drive-through event provided a safe format for families to drive through a Halloween pre-decorated space in the City Hall Parking Garage. An opportunity for Police officers and city staff to safely celebrate with residents. Participants remained in their vehicles during the drive-through event.

November 11, 2020 Veterans Day Limited In-Person & Virtual

Ahead of Veteran's Day, the Garden Club of Coral Springs honored City veterans with over 100 native plants and a Blue Star Marker. The Veteran's Coalition and City of Coral Springs honored military members with a Virtual and in-person Veteran's Day ceremony.

November 19, 2020 Commission Swearing-In Socially Distanced & Virtual

Following the City's November election, a virtual swearing-in ceremony was held for three City Commission members who took their oaths of office: Mayor Scott Brook, Commissioner Joy Carter, and Commissioner Nancy Metayer. With a small outdoor stage and select family members, the ceremony was hosted LIVE on the city's Facebook page and CityTV.

December 6, 2020 Holiday Tree Lighting Virtual

The virtual tree lighting was a pre-recorded Christmas message from City Commissioners with special guest Santa Claus who produced a small magic show all the way from his workshop at the North Pole. As tradition, representation from the Make-A-Wish Foundation included a special master of ceremony to pull the official switch and light the City Hall tree.

December 7 & 8, 2020 Virtual Visit with Santa Virtual

Families who had previously participated in the Fire Department's annual Santa's Express visits were invited instead to a Virtual Visit with Santa to recreate the personal connection. 62 families signed up for a time slot and upon logging into the Zoom link were treated to a conversation with Santa via their computer. The department was able to use Santa's "workshop" from the Holiday Tree Lighting to create a realistic holiday background.

December 9, 2020 Holiday Drive-Thru Experience Drive-through

A 35-year tradition, the annual City Holiday Parade was reimagined into a drive through experience. Committed to reimagining events to safely celebrate, while ensuring the health and wellbeing of residents, the Holiday Drive-Thru Experience was a static display in which residents

followed a route at parade speed to view and enjoy festively decorated floats created by local community members, businesses, and city departments. Attendees had access to tune into 91.5FM for special holiday event messaging and familiar music.

December 15 and 17, 2020

Santa's Express

Parade

Each year, the City of Coral Springs looks forward to Santa's arrival on a big red fire engine visiting family who participated in the Firefighter Benevolent Association's "Santa's Express". The Fire Department reimagined Santa's Express to reach as many Coral Springs and Parkland families as possible during a "no stop" tour spread over two evenings consisting of two engines. Mapping and a GPS tracking link was provided in advance so families could identify when Santa would arrive in their neighborhood. Live updates were also provided on the Fire Department's social media pages.

10.0 PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A VACCINATION STRATEGY

In anticipation of the FDA issuing an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for one or more brands of a COVID-19 vaccination, the City of Coral Springs with the oversight of our Medical Director, Dr. Peter Antevy, began to plan for the establishment of a vaccination site within the city. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis identified the Florida Department of Emergency Management (FDEM) as the lead agency to coordinate vaccine distribution, and for the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) to manage and distribute vaccines through each of the 67 county health departments.

The initial goal was to vaccinate residents 65 and older and those who live in nursing and assisted living facilities. This effort was coordinated by FDEM. The Broward County Health Department established Points of Distribution (POD) for eligible individuals requiring a vaccine.

In anticipation of opening a city run POD, refrigeration equipment was purchased to store the vaccines and a location was identified. Through relationships established in the city's Business Recovery Task Force, a vacated restaurant within the Coral Square Mall was selected. The city originally planned for a drive through POD, but it was determined that a walk-up site was more efficient.

With planning and the purchase of necessary supplies completed, the city was informed there were no funds to open additional sites. City leadership was able to secure a commitment from the Broward County Manager to fund the projected \$100,000 for the first month. On Monday, January 11, 2021, Coral Springs opened the first municipally managed vaccination site in Broward County.

The first two days of opening were designated as "soft opening" allowing personnel to evaluate the site and make necessary adjustments prior to the official opening. Appointments were made via city staff utilizing contacts from city employees, committees, and other active seniors. The two days of test running procedure proved to be highly beneficial allowing management to test methods for minimizing wait times. If each vaccine station employed two nurses, one for administering the vaccine and one for prepping and processing paperwork, each vaccine only took an average of one minute and 30 seconds. One nurse to complete the entire process resulted in an average of two minutes and 50 seconds per vaccine administered.

Opening the Coral Springs site did not make additional appointments available initially and this was a frustration for residents. Even though the state was focused on quickly and efficiently vaccinating as many people as possible, obstacles of limited vaccine supply along with opening new vaccination sites, equaled an abundance of people struggling to get an appointment. According to the FDOH, 40,000 people were on the list awaiting vaccination appointments. FDOH staff worked to schedule those appointments for the Coral Springs site and other PODs opening throughout Broward County.

The Coral Springs site was designated as a “walk-up” POD which was the first in the county. It proved more inclusive to all residents with varying methods of transportation. The location chosen offered ample parking and space to socially distance those waiting to receive their vaccination. The South Florida climate during winter and spring months allowed for those waiting to remain outside, well ventilated. Vaccinating roughly 500 people initially and ramping up to 1,000 people per day, when patients returned for their second dose.

The check-in and waiting process was accompanied by a video presentation from the city's Medical Director reviewing frequently asked questions and a nurse on hand to answer any allergy and medication questions. This gave the residents reassurance during wait times.

With the Simon Mall site being such a success, Cleveland Clinic offered a partnership with the city to coordinate mobile “pop-up” sites throughout Coral Springs. The availability of multiple locations allowed the city to provide more accessibility to underserved communities. The partnership provided the city with an opportunity to create strike teams utilizing Cleveland Clinic nurses and city staff to provide onsite vaccinations at senior communities including St. Andrew's Towers, Country Club Towers, and “pop-up” vaccination sites at community parks for the underserved population. Seniors and those who are most vulnerable are often less technologically savvy, especially when navigating appointment systems that are continually crashing or unreliable. The strike teams offered an easier, less-stressful solution to our vulnerable population.

11.0 FOCUS GROUP PERSPECTIVES

All reviews of an incident or crisis should include evaluation of accomplishments and the identification for areas of improvement. Throughout the interview process with staff, community members, and businesses, many areas were identified.

There seemed to be a gap in communication and outreach for the Code Compliance team. Due to the numerous and conflicting Emergency Orders pertaining to the closure of non-essential businesses, it was difficult to identify the correct businesses or how enforcement was to be executed. The City of Coral Springs identified staffing changes, additional customer service training and the City Attorney began meeting regularly with county and municipal legal counsel to clarify Emergency Orders.

To aid businesses that were suffering, the city temporarily stopped enforcing strict signage policies; however, this message was not broadly reported. Many businesses did not take advantage of the opportunity, for fear of wasting money on signage that would be removed by

the city. The city did not widely broadcast the reduction in signage enforcement and began the process of reinforcing ordinances effective January 2021.

Determining essential versus non-essential businesses was a struggle. Through working groups with the Broward County City Managers Association (BCCMA), regular mayoral teleconferences and work with the Broward League of Cities, the city advocated for changes to emergency orders which benefitted businesses.

Businesses who were connected with the city's Economic Development Office (EDO) were better informed and aware of opportunities such as grant funding. Businesses who were unaware of EDO and its services, did not receive important information. The city has since begun working toward new programs to recruit and invite businesses to stay informed through digital communication and other outlets.

Personnel expressed disappointment that when they fell ill with COVID-19, they were not checked on by their supervisor. Safety Officers did follow up with employees, but additional direct supervisor contact was recommended by several staff who were interviewed.

Several employees in the police department expressed disappointment in the lack of planning for staffing shortages due to exposure or illness, indicated there needed to be a process in place to fill these openings. If there were a plan in place it was never communicated. Possible scenarios being used by other departments:

- Identifying a COVID-19 team of possibly young and healthy officers, with added layers of PPE who would specifically respond to COVID-19 calls, reserving older officers and those with pre-existing conditions.
- Fallout plan that substitutes detectives or specialized unit officers to road patrol when illness required officers isolate.

Regardless of the myriad of methods used to communicate, residents and employees still missed messaging. Leadership was frequently encouraged to meet with staff one-on-one to clarify messages.

11.1 BUSINESS INTERVIEWS

After meeting with city employees, the consultant met with business owners from various specialties which included restaurants, fitness centers, professional services, contractors, and retail.

The City of Coral Springs had 4,720 active businesses in the city as of October 2020. To obtain individual and direct feedback from businesses, the city invited businesses to attend a focus group session. In addition, the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Office assisted with inviting local business leaders. Of the 47 businesses that initially registered, 23 attended the group discussions.

Participants were asked to separate their experiences into two categories: what the city did well to support the business community and where the city fell short, adding suggestions for improvement.

Business Perspectives: What the City Did Well

Many businesses shared similar experiences with the Project Consultant; the feedback below has been condensed to eliminate duplication.

- \$1,000 grants issued to 250 Coral Springs businesses
- Free consultations for safe re-opening
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and re-opening kits delivered to businesses.
- Signage: When the county rolled out requirements on signage for COVID-19 precautions in multiple languages, the city created, printed, and delivered the signs to businesses.
- COVID-19 testing: Prior to free public testing, the city created a business-only COVID-19 testing site and offered discounted rates of \$75. Once public sites opened in Coral Springs, all COVID-19 testing was free.
- The Economic Recovery Taskforce: To bridge the gap between businesses and local government, weekly meetings focused on business challenges and action items to aid recovery. The members included representation from the city and business owners or general managers.
- Economic Development Office communicated with businesses to translate legal orders and assess the needs of businesses.
- Advocated for extended county curfew hours for local restaurants through the Business Recovery Taskforce.
- Assisted Living Facility (ALF) outreach, and assistance with PPE and testing.
- Consistent communications through social media and tailored emails assisted business in determining ordinance details.
- City-run community food distribution
- Greater preparation than other surrounding cities: a participant mentioned that during company meetings with other area general managers other cities did very little to support business, he felt Coral Springs “hit it out of the park.”
- Safe protesting for civil unrest with no rioting or looting of local businesses.
- Having City Manager, Frank Babinec was exceptional.
- City messaging coming from the Police Chief, following the death of George Floyd
- Code compliance officers who came out to inspect, were there consistently, providing guidelines, delivering flyers, and supporting businesses in new COVID-19 precautions, providing them with guidance on enforcement.
- Police and code compliance assisted mask enforcement.
- Relaxed signage enforcement for businesses that were still open.
- Assisted businesses by issuing emergency orders allowing larger curbside pickup areas, with tents and cones for traffic safety. Some businesses excelled with curbside citing a 25% increase in sales.

- Offered educational seminars and webinars online.
- Online permitting was available, and employees were answering phone lines. Some businesses reported an increase in volume due to home renovations.
- The city was responsive and proactive to the concerns of local businesses.
- City Commission and public meetings were made available virtually.

Business Perspectives: What the City Could Have Done Better

The closing of businesses deemed non-essential was the most drastic and difficult challenge for business owners. Businesses that were deemed non-essential during the initial shut down suffered financially. They were angry and felt the determinations of who was essential versus non-essential was unjust. Business owners and managers identified concerns below.

- "The county crushed us in their ordinances. Who has the right to determine what is non-essential? If families depend on income from a business, they are essential. Every business can take actions to make their employees and customers safe and should be provided the opportunity to earn an income."
- "Not the year to make money, just trying to survive."
- "If people feel comfortable, they shouldn't be told they can't."
- "There were many inconsistencies with the types of businesses being deemed essential versus non-essential."
- "Small businesses like dog groomers could function safely but instead were closed down, yet Pet Supermarket could be open."
- "A pool heating company stayed open the whole time."
- "Nail salons opened with four technicians and four customers, but I can't do individual sessions with one person in my studio."
- "Flower shops can function with a contactless system like curbside for restaurants but be shut down and threatened with \$10k fines."
- "Contractors were deemed essential with workers in and out of homes and buying supplies all over town. You can go over to Walmart with 1,000 other people inside but Wings Plus couldn't open their dining room. It didn't make any sense."
- "Yoga and small gyms were categorized the same as a large fitness facility, some gyms could not open for one-on-one training. I invested in electrostatic machines and UV lights, and still could not open."
- "For a town that is so mental health-focused this piece is missing, fitness matters."
- "Geographically there were other inconsistencies. You could drive 15 minutes to Boca Raton in Palm Beach and visit those businesses, which were open and with less restrictions."

When the Project Consultant interviewed local businesses leaders, some expressed a level of frustration and indicated additional areas of improvement:

- Increased visits by all City Commissioners to local businesses.
- Greater empathy from the City Commission when speaking from the dais about the struggles of the business community.

- City Commission members meet with and hear the needs of local business to better fight for small businesses.
- Greater dollar amount for grant opportunities offered through the City of Coral Springs to have a greater impact.

There were some businesses who expressed disappointment that Code Compliance was persistent and aggressive during the initial shut down. One business owner interviewed said, *"Threatening fines, they would come in to take photos, and make sure businesses are shutting down and return day after day."* Businesses believed they were being watched, one owner stated, *"Over the top! You'd be sitting in your business doing paperwork, Code Compliance around trying to catch you. They wanted masks on everyone."* This business owner indicated he was inside his business with his three kids and his wife, all members of the same household.

Additional areas of improvement expressed by business owners during interviews included:

- Some businesses were unaware of relaxed signage enforcement.
- Businesses reported being unaware of business grant opportunities, did not qualify, did not apply in time, or were not awarded.
- Grant application process took almost two hours and was a slow process.
- Information should be at a physical central site. Digital communication may not get out to all people; other forms of communication should have been considered.
- The city website was hard to navigate to find information.
- Businesses should not be responsible for enforcing rules; public safety should impose fines and enforcement on individuals.
- Provide details about COVID-19 positive test results for just the city, not just countywide.
- Coral Springs has a reputation for being the worst place to open a small business because there are too many rules and regulations. The city should look at the future and find ways for more businesses to open. Riverside Drive looks terrible, but the city is so strict on businesses with signage rules and limitations.
- School closures were a big obstacle, especially once businesses could reopen and schools were not. Initial closures only gave a two-day notice. Childcare costs skyrocketed with fewer spots available due to reduced capacity COVID restrictions.
- Signs- should have included why persons needed to wear a mask.
- More clear communication on the legal terms and Emergency Orders.
- Mental health counseling hotline for those dealing with job loss, etc.
- City Manager Babinec promotes unified messaging, but it was not getting out there, to the community.
- Would be great to publish a list of businesses that are open on websites and social media to help bring in new business.
- The reopening plan was not well established, seemingly went from phase one to three with little explanation of the determining factors.
- Lots of communications around shutting down but not on reopening.

- The city needs thorough planning for events like this going forward, that is presented ahead of large changes or emergencies.
- Someone in the city to form a small business group to serve business members would even pay for that.
- Identifying the vulnerable population with a call back process to follow up on them.
- Food distribution, for the community and kids, delivery for people who can't drive. One business owner mentioned seeing people picking out of the dumpsters behind Sam's Club.
- Status updates on a telephone hotline.

The Project Consultant who authored this document indicated some of the interview responses were surprising because areas that were reported as falling short by businesses, were areas city staff identified as a success. In addition, focus group members faulted the city for county, state, and federal regulations which the city had no control over. This reflects a possible communication gap between the city and registered businesses. Although the city utilized over 30 various communication methods to reach residents and businesses, some who participated in were unaware of information, therefore did not take advantage of opportunities.

WastePro, the city's exclusive provider of solid waste collection, disposal, and recycling participated in the business discussion and shared their experience and unique challenges throughout the pandemic. Challenges they faced included:

- Weekly bulk pickup and traditional solid waste collection are part of the residential contract, however with Shelter at Home Orders, there was an excess trash from persons staying home, residential decluttering, home improvements, and bulky takeout waste.
- The volume of trash increased so greatly collection trucks could not complete routes before offloading, resulting in a backlog lasting several weeks.
- Employee illness and exposure to COVID-19 caused a workforce shortage.

The WastePro representative did indicate that greater communications with residents could have resulted in less complaints.

The City of Coral Springs thanks the following businesses for their participation and robust conversations to promote improvement to operations and communication.

- ABC Roofing
- Art Plumbing/ Handy services
- Green Thumb Lawn & Garden
- Bill/Management Co.
- The Bin Doctor
- Brodzki Jacobs
- Cambridge Diagnostics
- Coral Springs Center for the Arts
- Excel Electrical Group

- Gator Vacuum and Sewing
- Hair Color Concepts
- Holisticrats Yoga & Wellness
- Intense Training
- Jamba Juice
- Kiddie Academy
- Nothing Bundt Cakes
- Oma's Garden
- Plaster Carousel
- Retirement Council
- RJD Corps.
- Sicilian Oven
- Signarama
- Sole Source Shoe Repair
- Tita's Bakery
- Touch of Class Day Spa
- Voltaire Design
- WastePro
- Wild Flowers
- Yoga 4 Life

12.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bob Norton, Tenzinga Consulting Services

The City of Coral Springs would like to thank our Project Consultant, Bob Norton, of Tenzinga Consulting Services, who authored the first volume of the city's COVID-19 Historical Perspective.

Mr. Norton conducted panel discussions with employees, business leaders and community leaders; as well as one-on-one interviews with the Coral Springs City Commission, to obtain a better perspective into the City of Coral Springs' response to the COVID-19 pandemic from operations to community and business outreach. Thanks to his efforts, more than 150 persons were interviewed for this document, providing opportunities for improvement and guidance for other organizations faced with a challenge of this magnitude.

Dr. Peter Antevy, Medical Director

The City of Coral Springs owes a tremendous debt of gratitude to our Medical Director, Dr. Peter Antevy, for his leadership, expertise, and guidance throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Antevy was well informed about the pandemic quickly spreading across the world, and subsequently the United States in early 2020. He ensured the Emergency Medical Services section of the Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department were starting to prepare. His foresight, led to the early creation of Incident Command System, resulting in the ordering of personal

protective gear to protect first responders and other policy decisions to ensure continuity of operations.

Dr. Antevy made the safety of the Coral Springs workforce a priority, ensuring access to testing when it was not readily available, the implementation of safety and health protocols and offered medical guidance to employees and their families who contracted the virus.

When vaccination distribution was made available through the Florida Department of Emergency Management, Dr. Antevy led the city's efforts to open the first municipally run vaccination site in the State of Florida. In addition, through his leadership, the city was able to provide mobile vaccination at locations with persons who are over the age of 65 or most vulnerable.

The public information Dr. Antevy provided regarding COVID-19, including prevention practices, through live Q&A sessions broadcasted on social media and CityTV, were instrumental at the onset of the pandemic to prevent panic and misinformation. As new information was made available, including vaccination availability, Dr. Antevy made himself available for additional digital communication and spoke at public meetings.

Regardless of the many challenges faced throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the city's continuity of operations, public information and distribution of vaccines are all a credit to the leadership of Dr. Peter Antevy.

13.0 RESOURCES

Additional resources mentioned throughout the document can be found by clicking the links below or using a smartphone device to scan the QR Code.

Communications- Press releases, stories and event scripts, a sampling of social media graphics, and public communications planning.



Emergency Orders- A complete list of emergency orders issued from March 2020-September 2020. Also included are Coronavirus updates which are press releases that detail the emergency orders for the general public.



Safety & Security- Contains a Safety Officer Handbook, Coral Springs- Parkland Fire Department COVID Response Binder, and Safety Officer Responsibilities document.



[Data, Planning, Analytics](#) - Comprehensive folder contains unit objectives and situation reports from March 2020 through December 2020.



[Financial](#) - Includes a CARES Act presentation, Financial Services recommendations and impact reports.



[Legal/City Clerk](#) - Contains a list of emergency orders and correspondence from Governor DeSantis.



[Human Resources](#) - Incorporates policies and procedures for workforce reallocation, mission statements, and other employee guidelines including safety procedures and returning to the workforce after exposure.



[Timelines](#) – COVID-19 Department action timelines for Emergency Management, Human Resources and Information Technologies



