

April 5, 2020

Dear Livermore,

Livermore has entered a State of Emergency. In these past three weeks, our world has been turned upside down.

After the initial and understandable confusion, we have gotten used to isolation. We have learned to substitute online meetings and socializing in place of in-person interaction. Some of us have adapted to working from home. Some have taken on the risk of providing essential services. Some are suffering with jobs that have vanished. Many of us now face children doing lessons at home. Many of us are helping as individuals, calling neighbors, delivering groceries and running errands, making masks for healthcare workers, ordering from local businesses.

Livermore has responded to the State of Emergency with remarkable grace. I am proud to be a part of this community.

For me, as with us all, the past three weeks have been about getting used to this new reality. But now that I'm used to it, I am beginning to grieve for what we have lost, at least for now. As we headed into this crisis, Livermore had just voted two to one for Measure P, effectively approving the City's downtown plan. That plan is about supporting and extending our communal life. These days, but for take-out business, downtown is quiet. While the state is working to house much of the homeless population during the pandemic, plans to house the Tri-Valley's homeless population have slowed and I worry that they will not come to pass. The City is working on a new Climate Action Plan; that is on hold. So much is on hold for now, with the future uncertain.

I have confidence that, ultimately, we will survive and thrive as a city—and as individuals. But the losses now and to come are real. We should give them their due.

The past three weeks have been an upheaval and adjustment. The next several weeks will be a marathon. No matter how much the past weeks of isolation will reduce the spread of COVID-19, Livermore is not an island; there are cases here, whether symptomatic or not, whether diagnosed or not. COVID-19 is the disease that Dr. Anthony Fauci calls his worst nightmare: a respiratory-borne illness that spreads easily with severe consequences for many. There is no fixed day at which life returns to normal; we still don't know enough about how long the disease can spread or how many people actually have or have had it. And so, we need to find the emotional fortitude to manage the current reality for as long as it takes.

It will be one day at a time of being lonely or depressed. Times that we worry about money. Times when our children are climbing the walls—perhaps literally. Sometimes it will feel as if this isolation will go on forever. Sometimes it will be easy to be angry and blame others for this reality.

Many psychologists have given suggestions for coping:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
- Alameda County Behavioral Health
<http://www.acbhcs.org/>
- American Psychological Association
<https://www.apa.org/practice/programs/dmhi/research-information/pandemics>

The days I can stick to a schedule, keep a sense of humor, feel compassion and humility, and do something for others are better days.

For me, story matters. In the deepest stories, including those foundational to religions, the prophet or leader takes a long journey. Buddha did, so did Jesus, as did Mohammed and Moses. Loneliness and isolation were part of the whole journey. In other stories, there are smaller groups. One of my favorite books growing up was Lord of the Rings. For every character, the slog through his—and yes, they were almost all men—journey brought growth and strength that no character could have imagined they had. For my children’s generation, the Harry Potter books gave the same message.

We are, in fact, fighting a war. This one will not be won by fighting other people, but by understanding and defeating a virus. We fight—and win—by continuing to support each other from afar. We win as we find ways to better ourselves and the world, no matter how difficult it seems and is. We win as we find ways to support those who suffer physically and economically. We are on this journey together and we can prevail.

Sincerely,



Council Member Trish Munro
City of Livermore