

CORNERSTONE OF OUR COMMUNITY

International Falls Area
Chamber



March 18, 2020

RE: COVID-19: Chamber Events and Operations Update

Dear Chamber Members and Community,

The Chamber's Executive Committee and President have been in discussion to review and plan the Chamber's response to COVID-19. There is a lot of news out there and the Chamber is looking at information from credible resources to guide our decisions. We are monitoring county, state and federal health agencies daily. We are also fortunate to have information from our various partnerships which include neighboring Chambers of Commerce, the Minnesota Chamber and the US Chamber of Commerce. Much of the information we have read includes warnings on socializing with large groups and contact with others. Part of the Chamber is a social organization, and for the sake of our members and the community we will heed these precautions carefully.

What this means:

All Chamber events, programs and committee meetings are suspended, cancelled or postponed at this time. This includes events such as a Chamber Lunch & Learn (April 8th), the Chamber's Annual Banquet & Awards Ceremony (May 7th) and Grow Minnesota! meetings. This also includes Ambassador, Public Policy, Retail and Economic Development committee meetings. Chamber staff is currently updating the calendar noting each event that will be suspended. At this time, we do not have an exact date when Chamber events and meetings will resume.

What we are doing:

- International Falls is a resilient community. Together, we are going to face this challenge. Chamber events are suspended at this time, but that doesn't mean Chamber work stops. Business is open. The Chamber is open. We invite members and the community to call or email with their questions and limit your in-person visits to the office. We're here ready to connect you at this important time to a variety of business and community resources. The Chamber is currently operating at normal hours, M-F 8am-5pm. Please keep the Chamber posted of how your business is operating and we will continue to promote businesses open during this complex time.
- The Chamber staff is taking precautions with social distancing within the office and practicing best practices related to hand washing/hygiene as well as office sanitization.
- The Chamber Executive Committee and President will have regular calls to review our local, state and federal agency requests and restrictions for public and social gatherings. Chamber activities will resume as soon as we know it is the responsible action.



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- Annual Banquet: Chamber staff is working with Annual Banquet sponsors, participants and hosts to reschedule these premier events for later dates this year. There is also a delay to announcing award winners, including Citizen of the Year, until we can assemble a nomination committee meeting. We still plan to have this event and hope you will join us. New date will be announced soon.
- Grow Minnesota!: The Chamber has temporarily suspended these meetings for the next two weeks and will evaluate if they should be conducted via conference call before in-person meetings resume, as it serves as a good forum to touch base with our business community.
- We plan to get creative during this time! Chamber staff is already thinking of ideas for how members can engage with the Chamber and area businesses. We are also utilizing this time to focus on internal operational projects.
- The Chamber is working with its partners to find out more on possible government financial resources for businesses. We will also send out communication on help for hourly wage earners when specific information becomes available. (See links below.)

Our decision was not made lightly and a number of items influenced our decisions. The Chamber works with a diverse population, some of which are more vulnerable to COVID-19. The Chamber also works with and relies on a variety of partners across the community to host our events. Some of these partners have made similar decisions or have communicated to us that they will soon. Our healthcare members have confirmed this is the right decision for our community.

Please know that we are here to support your business and your employees through this as best that we can. Do not hesitate to reach out to us if there is anything we can do to assist you in the interim. A reminder that one of the best things we can do for our community is continue to support those businesses that are located here, open and providing service. The storm will pass and the sun shall will once again shine on our vibrant community. We look forward to rescheduling our Annual Banquet and celebrating that day with you.

In solidarity,

Jay Bartkowski
Chair, Board of Directors

Tricia Heibel
President

Resource Links:

DEED Information & Resources for Employers Re:COVID: <https://mn.gov/deed/newscenter/covid/employers/>
US SBA Disaster Assistance: <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/disaster-assistance>
US Chamber of Commerce – Combating the Coronavirus: <https://www.uschamber.com/coronavirus>
Minnesota Chamber of Commerce Business COVID Toolkit: <https://www.mnchamber.com/blog/your-business-covid-19-ready#Keeping%20workplaces%20safe%20and%20healthy>