

May 4th 2021 Community Update Transcript

This is Dr. Joe Pat Hatem, Mayor of the City of Southport. The City of Southport is not only “Staying the Course” and “Steady as She Goes” but is at full sails with the wind at our back, prepared to meet any challenge or change our direction.

With respect to the pandemic, Southport has led the way and we have set sail on a journey of recovery. Southport led the way last year with respect to public health measures in declaring a state of emergency, in the mask mandate, and in the limitation of mass gatherings on the Fourth of July. Those were the correct decisions.

We recently led the way last month in announcing on April 5th, the lifting of restrictions in our parks and certain city facilities. This was before the Governor’s Executive Order which was announced on April 28th and the CDC announcement which lifted the mask mandate for outdoors and for outdoor dining and also modified restrictions on the number of people allowed for indoor and outdoor gatherings.

Even with these modifications, there still is not a recommendation for gatherings of thousands for parades, fairs, and festivals. However, by continuing to follow the Governor’s Executive Order and CDC guidelines, the city is now able to open our parks to permitted events on June 1st instead of these events being held on the Garrison Lawn.

Franklin Square Park will be open as in 2019 for the Summer Market and the Summer Concert in the Park Series and without the mandate of wearing a mask.

I am still emphasizing that there is a mask mandate for indoor activities, as well as social distancing and good hand hygiene—The Three Ws.

City Hall and The Visitors Center will be open, business as usual except for continued mask wearing, on June 1st.

Most importantly, I am asking every citizen to “Take Your Best Shot”, get a vaccine, and encourage your family and friends wherever they may live to do the same. We can immunize our way out of this pandemic.

The City of Southport is recovering economically not only in the private sector, where our yacht basin and local businesses are pleasantly overwhelmed with activity, our city is sound financially as we continue our budget process for the fiscal year 2021-2022.

We are receiving funds from the American Rescue Plan, \$1.2 million dollars with respect to expenses from the pandemic, and will be receiving FEMA reimbursement from hurricane expenses.

The budget is a reflection of the city’s Strategic Plan and there is a prioritized list of projects and policies including infrastructure issues, roads such East Bay Street, the repair of the street and the sidewalk; Brunswick Street, repair of the street and erosion mitigation; safety in the yacht basin with a pedestrian walkway and traffic pattern changes; to overall waterfront stabilization

and erosion control which I am working closely with our local legislators for funding of this important project not only for our city and county, but for our state. For additional details please see the City Newsletter and The State Port Pilot.

May is a special month that includes Memorial Day May 31st; National Military Appreciation Month; National Police Week May 9th-15th, Police Officer Memorial Day on May 15th; Teacher's Appreciation Week May 3rd-7th; National Nurses Week, May 6th -12th; National Day of Prayer, May 6th; the Anniversary of the founding of the American Red Cross, May 21st, 1881; and Mother' Day on May 9th.

So remember a special teacher, I remember my First Grade Teacher, Anabelle Daughtry, at Rosemary Elementary School who taught me how to read; we remember our military and are grateful for their service; we remember our police officers who keep us safe; we honor our nurses who provide care; and we celebrate and remember our mothers and those who had and have a maternal presence in our lives. And on May 6th, we pray with one voice for our citizens, our city, our state and our nation.

Stay Well, Stay Safe, Stay Southport Strong, and Steady as She Goes.