



News Release

Thursday, April 21, 2020
For Immediate Release

Mayors unveil plans for phased reopening

Community urged to continue steps to reduce infection risks

CLARKSVILLE, Tenn. – Montgomery County Mayor Jim Durrett and City of Clarksville Mayor Joe Pitts rolled out plans Thursday for the phased reopening of commercial activity in Clarksville-Montgomery County.

Phase One of the plan is expected to take effect Friday, May 1, when businesses that are able to complete an extensive permitting process will be allowed to open. Businesses eligible to apply for Phase 1 permits include restaurants, retail shops and personal services businesses such as barbers, hair stylists and nail salons. Full details for businesses will be released Monday, April 27.

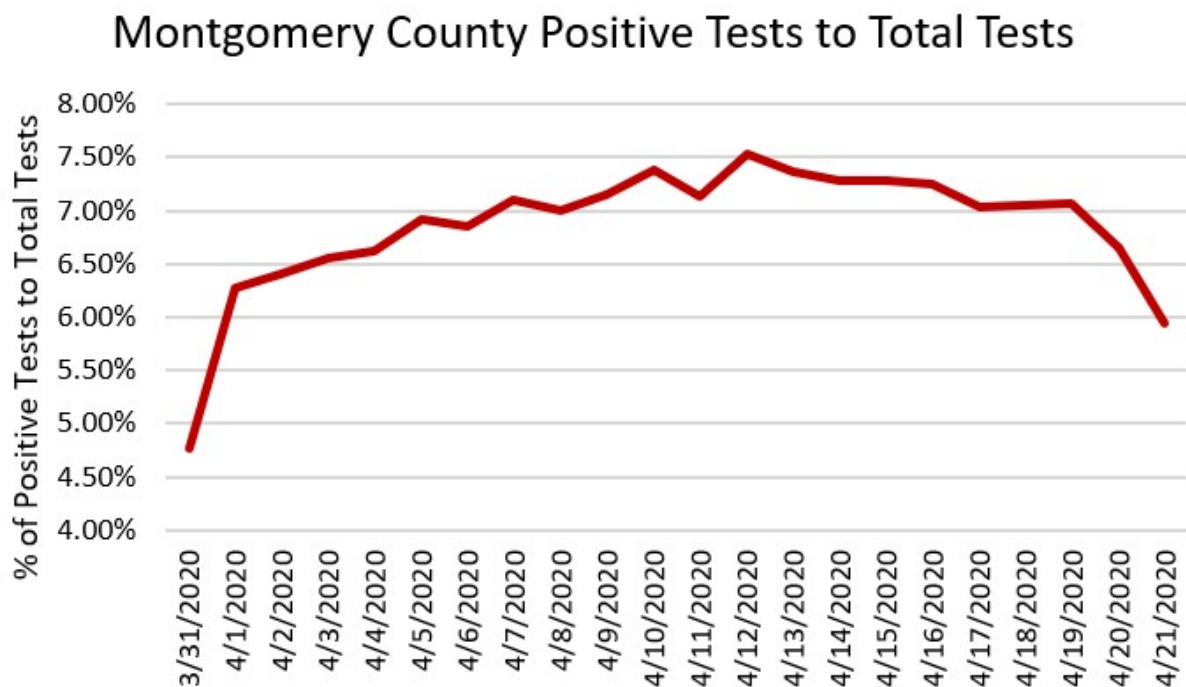
In another important element of Phase 1, businesses that were deemed essential and remained open through the stay-at-home era will be required to obtain a permit, increase their safety measures and allow less traffic in their stores.

The mayors met extensively in recent days with their chiefs of staff, local public health officials, City and County attorneys and representatives from Fort Campbell to develop a plan to move the community beyond the stay-at-home orders put in place last month to slow the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Together, with our orders to limit non-essential activity, we have taken effective, necessary steps to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community,” Mayor Durrett said. “Now, with a measure of success in our battle against this health crisis, we want to talk about the steps for reopening our community to business and activity.”

Mayor Pitts said reopening decisions were being guided by rigorous study of daily testing data. The decision to restore some activity in Phase I is based on the national standard of a downward trend of reported, documented COVID-19 cases over a 14-day period.

Statisticians at Austin Peay State University and local public health officials are analyzing local testing data and providing a daily chart, which shows the rate of positive tests for novel coronavirus compared to all such tests being conducted in the community.



“As you can see in the graph, this key metric has been declining since our peak percentage of positive tests on April 13,” Mayor Pitts said. “Our rate of infection has also declined since the peak in April. We have been looking at this data every day and are pleased to report the consistent decline. As we see that the spread of COVID-19 remains in control, more and more of our normal activities and gatherings will be able to resume.”

On Monday, Gov. Bill Lee announced the state order for Tennesseans to remain at home will expire Thursday, April 30. Under Lee’s plan, many businesses in 89 of Tennessee’s 95 counties, including Montgomery County, will be allowed to reopen, but still be subject to local regulations. The state’s other six counties -- Shelby, Madison, Davidson, Hamilton, Knox, and Sullivan counties -- have local rather than state health departments, and also will proceed under more localized planning.

“We are well-aware that Gov. Lee’s stay-at-home order will be ending on April 30 and have been diligently working out a plan for Phase 1 of our reopening,” Mayor Durrett said. “It’s fully possible that some of our operating requirements will be more restrictive than the state’s order.”

Here’s a broad outline of how the phased reopening of the community will unfold.

- On Monday, April 27, Montgomery County and the City of Clarksville will issue new Emergency and Executive Orders that will legally define the terms of the reopening.
- With the new regulations in place, businesses will get several days -- from Tuesday, April 28 to Thursday, April 30 -- to apply online for permits to reopen. Some may choose to wait so the application process will remain open.
- The online permit process will spell out in detail what businesses must do to obtain operating permits. On Friday, May 1 businesses that meet the Safe Operating Restrictions outlined in the Emergency and Executive Orders will be able to reopen.

The permit process makes businesses responsible for safeguarding community health by living up to the Safe Operation Protocols in the orders. To get a permit, businesses must agree to ensure social distancing, prevent unnecessary contact and unacceptably large crowds, protect employee health and increase sanitation, among other requirements.

To enforce the requirements, law enforcement and administrative personnel of the City and County will inspect businesses as they operate to ensure they are doing what they agreed to do when they obtained a permit. If businesses don’t comply, their permits and business licenses can be suspended or revoked and other penalty actions allowed by law will be considered.

Both mayors appealed to citizens to remain vigilant in the fight against COVID-19.

“We want to thank every business, every organization, every family and every individual for buckling down during the stay-at-home period, for making necessary sacrifices and for doing the right things,” Mayor Pitts said. “But everyone must remember, we are not declaring victory, and we are still in a battle against COVID-19. Even as we strive to bring our community back to a reasonable level of activity, we must continue aggressive efforts to limit the spread of this serious disease.”

Mayor Durrett said the team of local government leaders, healthcare professionals and public health experts will continuously monitor data about COVID-19 and make adjustments as indicated.

“If the trend starts to go in a different direction, we may have to step back and tighten restrictions,” Mayor Durrett said. “The speed at which our community moves forward will come down to individual practices and responsibility.”



Mayor Joe Pitts; Wes Golden, Clarksville Health & Safety Manager; and Mayor Jim Durrett discuss reopening planning during a work session at the County Courthouse.

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MEDIA CONTACT

Richard V. Stevens
Communications Director
City of Clarksville
931.648.6128 (office)
931.980.8300 (mobile)
richard.stevens@cityofclarksville.com

Michelle Newell

Communications Director/ Public Information Officer
Montgomery County Government
(931) 648-8482 (office)
(931) 217-3332 (mobile)
manewell@mcgtn.net