

*Pandemic Perspectives: Jeffersonville Residents Recount Their Lives During the 2020 Covid-19 Pandemic. Interview with Mayor Mike Moore*

Jen Weidner 0:02

Today is June 1, 2021, I'm Jen Weidner with the Jeffersonville Township Public Library conducting interviews for *Pandemic Perspectives: Jeffersonville Residents Recount Their Lives During the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic*. This project was made possible with a grant from the Indiana Geological Society. I'm here today with Jeffersonville Mayor Mike Moore. Mayor Moore, how long have you been the mayor of Jeffersonville?

Mayor Mike Moore 0:25

I'm in my tenth year.

Jen Weidner 0:28

Do you remember your first reaction to hearing about COVID-19?

Mayor Mike Moore 0:32

Yeah, I was sitting in a conference table right over there and had a meeting with my public safety director and some of my Parks Department personnel and heard mention of the word "Corona", and they were talking about it. Of course it was a few months, a couple of months before the March epidemic really became well known, but I, like probably several other people, hear the word Corona, I thought it was a, some kind of a virus concerning drinking alcohol. So, I've learned a few things since then. And, you know, it's, it's been, it's been an educational process and we're still learning.

Jen Weidner 1:19

So, did you think it would become a problem in the United States or Indiana?

Mayor Mike Moore 1:23

Had I known it was gonna become the problem it was, it did, I would have moved my stock portfolio, because the stock market tanked. If you'd look at the data from the market in early to mid March, when things began to drop significantly, and I had a better understanding in January, I would have moved a little more quickly with my portfolio

Jen Weidner 1:48

Did the city of Jeffersonville have any kind of plans for any kind of pandemic or viral spread?

Mayor Mike Moore 1:56

Well at that meeting, which I believe took place in January, my safety director was putting in place at that time. So we've some, some suggestions of things we may be needing to get into, of course, two months before March we weren't sure how it was going to affect us. But Brian Smith, our safety director, you know, gets paid to look into things like that, so he was beginning to put together a plan and he was preparing us for, possibly, a summer where we had the parks

department at that meeting. He kind of resolved issues coming to us that may have an impact on our free concerts, on our swimming pool.

Jen Weidner 2:51

Yeah, 'cuz you will start planning early in the year, your thing is gonna start happening in May and June.

Mayor Mike Moore 2:55

December, January, is when you're starting to make right contracts for the artists that are going to perform, and in the concerts, and you're hiring lifeguards usually around February, March, but our safety director, you know, already kind of had an idea that this could have some impact on that. Of course, it grew to be much larger than we anticipated but the, yeah, I mean, some steps began to take place in January.

Jen Weidner 3:25

So, do you all work with the health department in a, on what you should be doing or shouldn't be doing?

Mayor Mike Moore 3:30

Yeah, you know, the CDC, the guidelines. I thought it was kind of silly. I know there were several – there probably still – are elected officials that took to the airwaves quite a bit. I'm no expert, and never wanted to pretend to be. I think I held too little question-and-answer, Facebook Live. But, you know, trying to answer some basic questions. I had a lot of elderly people coming up to me at Kroger in the early days. "What's going to happen, what's going to happen?" I'm the first to tell you, I'm not an expert, I'm not the guy to give you the answers, but that's when we went heavy into our Facebook page from the city, pushing "Here's how you can get more information, go to the CDC website. Here's a link in our Facebook page." I never wanted to be the guy who tried to pretend he had the answers

Jen Weidner 4:33

So much false information going around, too; you didn't want to perpetuate anything that you didn't know 100% was true.

Mayor Mike Moore 4:39

Yes, yes.

Jen Weidner 4:40

That's the last thing you needed!

Mayor Mike Moore 4:41

I was quick to say, I'm not the guy, I'm not the guy, I'm sorry, I know you want answers, but, you know, go here, go here, reach out over here, and the Health Department was very helpful, you know, we had a couple of meetings early on, you know what to expect, and what kind of, you know, how we could get to a point where if we saw a rash of contagious people, have a read on

a deal with that. So, the meetings with the Clark County Health Department were early on, and Dr. Yazel was extremely helpful directing that and, you know, that's where we were telling people who call our, my assistant, you know, for help, we were directed–

Jen Weidner 5:25

I'm sure she was bombarded with phone calls.

Mayor Mike Moore 5:27

Yeah, and you know we were passing them all over to the Health Department.

Jen Weidner 5:32

So, when the stay-at-home order was enacted, how did that affect city operations?

Mayor Mike Moore 5:38

City operations are completely impacted by revenue, revenue for all of the businesses in Jeffersonville. So, if restaurants and businesses are in decline because customers can't come in, can't be serviced, the whole entire revenue stream for what we do here at City Hall is hugely impacted, and there were ways the federal government and state government stepped in and helped small businesses. At a time people were looking for the city to write checks, you know, "Hey, I need help I can't pay this bill," we were just as impacted, and you know, it's when families struggle and businesses struggle, your city services struggle, because we don't just get the money off of a tree. When, when business is good for the private entrepreneur, it's good for the city of Jeff during a downtime, you know, we, I grew up here, so when JeffBoat was having its lean years, the city of Jeffersonville was having lean years.

Jen Weidner 6:51

I think people don't understand how it all works. It's all connected, they're like, "Oh well, the city has all this money," and like, where does that money come from?

Mayor Mike Moore 6:59

Yeah, and that's, you know, we've, we've, we've actually – it's been, it's been nice, and we know the state has acknowledged, Jeffersonville has been the most fiscally sound city in the state of Indiana. Yeah, that was, that was a huge, because every city brings in revenue, it's, "What do you do with that revenue," and obviously we're doing things and putting it, putting incentives out there to grow businesses, because the more they prosper.

Jen Weidner 7:26

We did prosper during the pandemic; how many new parks were opened? New businesses were opened.

Mayor Mike Moore 7:31

Yeah, we, we were, you know, being right across from Louisville, Kentucky all the, the four news channels. Over the last year, we're constantly reaching out and Jeffersonville inevitably was about the only city that was constantly still doing ribbon cuttings, groundbreaking, more jobs

coming into our city. And, you know, I had several conversations with a lot of the news channel reporters, and you know, there was, there was bad news everywhere else, but it was like every time we come over to Jeffersonville, there was a good story. And so we did continue to thrive. And I think everybody in Jeffersonville should, should take pride in that because we've got a very strong foundation. And there's going to be good times and there's going to be bad times, and you just, you pulled together, and you can get through things in, you know, we just took the toughest year ever, probably, Jeffersonville has seen.

Jen Weidner 7:34

Since the '37 Flood, probably.

Mayor Mike Moore 8:11

And yeah, and we're stronger because we fought through it, and we came out stronger on the other end of it.

Jen Weidner 8:40

So, even when City Hall was closed, your people were still working from home and getting things done moving forward.

Mayor Mike Moore 8:46

Yeah, I don't recall how City Hall was shut down completely for maybe two or three weeks, I'd have to go back and check. But then we came back with, and there was a, there was help from the federal government, we were able to buy computer laptops for anybody that works, most people into the old world through a computer. So, we were able to put them to work at their homes. And then we went to a red team blue team, and I did not want to cluster everyone together again, because if one person comes into an office, the whole office can be impacted, so we had one team red, and they would work one week, while the blue team was not allowed in any city facility. And then, of course, all the sanitizing took place through that week. And at the end of that week and then the next week, the blue team came in, and if it wasn't your week to be in city hall, you were working from home, but that worked out really well and May 17 was the day we kind of looked at when any adult had the opportunity to be vaccinated, and the length of time you would need to be safe after the vaccinated. May 17 was the day we, you know, we said back in probably early April, or late March, we're going to be open May 17 and we did, and now we're back to full force. We still have precautions. We are asking any city employee or visitor in City Hall who's not been vaccinated to please continue to wear a mask. And, you know, but, but if you've been vaccinated, I think it's time to try and get back to normal. The government and everybody has pleaded for people to be vaccinated. I've been vaccinated. I've encouraged others to do it. If you choose not do that, you're right, I'm not gonna make anybody do it, but my job is to keep people safe. So, if you've been vaccinated, you're welcome to come in City Hall without a mask, but I would ask, for public safety of the city of 50,000, if you have not, I'm going to ask you to put a mask on.

Jen Weidner 11:11

And some of us still wear masks because we're comfortable with that, and, yeah.

Mayor Mike Moore 11:17

I never go comfortable wearing a mask.

Jen Weidner 11:20

What do you think you've most learned from the pandemic?

Mayor Mike Moore 11:24

I, I see every challenge, every difficult thing that you face in life as a test. And I certainly would never want to go through this again, but I've learned how strong our community is, looking out for each other, I think, you know, at a time our country has been pulled apart with so many political differences. That's a part of life I really try and stay away from. I'm a politician, but I hate, I hate, I hate fighting. I hate—

Jen Weidner 12:07

It doesn't accomplish anything.

Mayor Mike Moore 12:09

Well, even, even if you disagree with somebody doesn't mean you've got to become bitter enemies, you just disagree, you know. So I think over the last year, I think Jeffersonville has, has learned, we can deal with the most difficult, worst times. And I think, you know, there's an old saying, and then a follow completely, "What doesn't kill me, makes me stronger." And I believe the city of Jeff is stronger today than it was a year-and-a-half ago, because we just pulled through something together that you'd never want to go through again, but because we went through it, we know what we're capable of, and, you know, I take a little more time now to spend some time with my kids spend, some time with my mom. I talk to God on a regular basis. You know, I take those small moments, and, you know, I take comfort in knowing that there's nothing we can't do.

Jen Weidner 13:18

Thank you very much for your time today.

Mayor Mike Moore 13:19

You're welcome.

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