

“When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Knox County, we didn’t initially have a formal process to keep every elected leader informed because everything was flying at us from every angle imaginable. There was no playbook for this. But we changed that quickly.

We now have a plan and it’s one I’m comfortable with and one that I feel everyone else is comfortable with.

Right off the bat, we set up the Joint Information Center through the EOC and the Health Department to get information out to everyone as fast as we possibly could. The Health Department also started holding daily briefings that were attended by myself and a number of other local elected leaders.

My Chief of Staff, Bryan Hair, began sending out a weekly email to the Board of Commissioners, keeping them informed about what our office is doing. And, my Director of Communications began sending out emails to all local elected leaders – city, county, Farragut, federal and state – almost daily to brief them on the latest COVID-19 news. All of this has been well-received.

Do I feel we could have done a better job early on? Yes, probably. But, again, we had a lot of stuff coming at us. As we quickly regained our footing and as things began to stabilize – and even before then – we definitely started doing a much better job of keeping the commissioners and other leaders involved.

You have to remember that when you’re dealing with the new and the unknown, there will always be a few bumps. We did the best we could, and we’ll certainly be prepared the next time – although I hope there isn’t a next time.

Further, in the coming days I’m going to meet with each commissioner individually to talk about the budget and I’m more than happy to hold an overall debriefing with the board when all of this is over. And, it goes without saying that if any commissioner – or city councilmember even – has a question, they can call me directly.”