

LANCASTER COUNTY

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MEDIA ALERT

March 16, 2020

CONTACT: Commissioners Office (717) 299-8300

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MEDIA ALERT

County Declaration of Disaster Emergency

WHAT: The Board of Commissioners will sign County Declaration of Disaster Emergency.

WHEN: Tuesday March 17, 2020 at the Commissioners Public Work Session at 10:00AM

TIME: 10:00AM

LOCATION: County Government Center, 150 N. Queen St., Lancaster. 7th Floor.

The Federal Government has now issued a national Disaster Declaration. Despite the fact that the County still does not have any confirmed cases at this time, that Federal declaration is a trigger for the County to also declare as it means that the County may now be eligible for recovery of County taxpayer funds spent during this time. Further, this afternoon the Governor has extended a shutdown of certain impacted counties to a full statewide shutdown.

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners will approve Declaration of Disaster Emergency at its public work session on 3/17/20. A County Declaration of Disaster Emergency does not invoke broad powers, but it does provide a mechanism to respond more rapidly to financial requirements, such as contracting, if needed.

We do this after consultation with Lancaster City, which we anticipate will also do so tomorrow in conjunction with the County.

This action is another step in the County's preparation and response to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. While we do not yet have cases of the coronavirus here in Lancaster County, the following steps have been and/or are being taken to prepare for that eventuality:

- Held a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) exercise in late January and have been updating the COOP to handle specific situations that may be affected by the coronavirus
- Created a webpage on County website to provide the public with access to accurate and up-to-date information and guidance
- Hold weekly meetings with County EMA leadership and community leaders
- Instituted more frequent cleaning of public spaces within County buildings

- Developed modified personnel policies
- Upgraded our IT capabilities to increase remote access for increased access to information and continuity of operations
- Held a press conference including several community leaders within the health systems, emergency services, long-term care facilities, schools and businesses
- Developed back up plans for holding the Primary Election on April 28
- Providing Department Heads more latitude to pivot some employees to offsite work, while maintaining core government functions.

We do not take the step of declaring a Disaster Emergency lightly. Not only does such a declaration convey the seriousness of the situation, but it affords government some ability to act more quickly to respond without need for time-consuming procedures and formalities.

This is the prudent time to do so, as the federal Declaration was a trigger for us, and it will provide the County with needed flexibility to implement, alter and/or add to the aforementioned actions already taken. We continue to provide the public with up to date information on the status of County services and guidance from federal and state authorities on our website.

We ask the public for patience during this turbulent time and to heed the recommendations for social distancing and keeping safe. We join with Lancaster City in calling for social distancing in accordance with CDC guidelines and further ask everyone to voluntarily increase their personal social distancing including the canceling of all non-essential activities.

Together we will get through this difficult time.

See website for more information:

<https://www.co.lancaster.pa.us/1296/Coronavirus-Disease-COVID-19>

DECLARATION OF DISASTER EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, a novel coronavirus (now known as “COVID-19”) emerged in Wuhan, China, began infecting humans in December 2019, and has since spread to 89 countries, including the United States; and

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) have declared COVID-19 a “Pandemic,” and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (“HHS”) Secretary has declared that COVID-19 creates a public health emergency; and

WHEREAS, the County of Lancaster (“County”) has been working in collaboration with the PEMA, DOH, and local health agencies to monitor and plan for the containment and subsequent mitigation of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, this pandemic is endangering the health, safety and welfare of a substantial number of persons residing in the County of Lancaster, and threatens to create problems potentially greater in scope than the County and Municipalities may be able to resolve on their own; and

WHEREAS, this threat of imminent pandemic throughout the County is of such magnitude and severity as to render essential the County’s coordination of emergency resources and mutual aid to the county and municipal

governments of this County and to require the activation of all applicable state, county, and municipal emergency response plans.

WHEREAS, this threat of imminent pandemic has the potential to cause significant adverse impacts upon the population throughout the County; and

WHEREAS, emergency management measures are required to reduce the severity of this pandemic and to protect the health, safety and welfare of affected residents in the County of Lancaster;

NOW, THEREFORE, WE, THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF LANCASTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA pursuant to the provisions of Section 7501 of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Services Code, (35 PA C.S., Section 7501), as amended, do hereby declare the existence of a disaster emergency as a result of this pandemic in the County of Lancaster;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we direct the Lancaster County Emergency Management Coordinator or his designee to coordinate the activities of the emergency response, to take all appropriate action needed to alleviate the effects of this pandemic, to aid in the continuation and restoration of essential public services as necessary, and to take any other emergency response action deemed necessary to respond to this emergency.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we authorize officials of Lancaster County to act as necessary to meet the current exigencies of this emergency, namely: by the employment of temporary workers, by the rental of equipment, by the purchase of supplies and materials, and by entering into such contracts and agreements for the performance of public work as may be required to meet the emergency, all without regard to those time-consuming procedures and formalities normally prescribed by law, mandatory constitutional requirements excepted.

This Declaration shall take effect immediately and continue until rescinded by the Board of Commissioners.

ATTEST:

Larry George, Chief Clerk
County of Lancaster, PA
Date: _____

Joshua G. Parsons, Chairman

Ray D'Agostino – Vice Chairman

Craig E Lehman

Board of Commissioners of
Lancaster County, Pennsylvania