

Draft

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
EMERGENCY MEETING**

March 17, 2020

**ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

PRESENT: Ryan Mayberry, Chairman
Larry Yoder, Vice-Chairman
Dr. Jeff Peal
Marty Pennell
Ronnie Reese

STAFF: Rick French, County Manager
Doug Gillispie, Public Services Director
Gary Herman, PIO
Jennifer Herman, Finance Director
Josh Mitchell, Public Works Director
Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board
Sylvia Turnmire, Human Resources Director
Billie Walker, Assistant Health Director
Leeanne Whisnant, Consolidated Human Services Director

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held an emergency meeting on Tuesday, March 17, 2020 in the Administration Building lower level conference room in Taylorsville, North Carolina to discuss planning and response efforts in regards to COVID-19 (coronavirus).

NCACC CONFERENCE CALL

At 12:00 PM, the group took part in a conference call hosted by the NC Association of County Commissioners where the following topics were discussed:

- Orders from Governor Roy Cooper to close schools, ban gatherings of more than 100 people, and close bars and restaurants except for take-out and delivery orders.
- Guidance on public hearings and state of emergency declarations.
- NCDHHS and DSS issues including child/adult care facilities, expanded hours for NCFASST due to staggered employee schedules, congregate meal delivery, Medicaid benefits/eligibility/renewals, delay of REDA audits, etc.
- NC Department of Public Instruction efforts to address meal delivery for free/reduced lunch recipients, half or full-day childcare for school-aged children, and remote learning options.

Information related to COVID-19 is available on both the NCACC and NCDHHS websites (number of cases, media briefings, topics of interests, guidance for local response).

LOCAL PREPAREDNESS UPDATE

Leeanne Whisnant, Consolidated Human Services Director, advised that as of this morning, NC had 40 cases of COVID-19. Five Alexander County families are currently in quarantine at home as a precaution until their test results are received (results take 12-72 hours once submitted). Staff is in daily contact with these individuals to monitor symptoms. She added that any positive test must be sent to the CDC for confirmation, which could take another 12-72 hours. The Health Department currently has 25 tests. All medical providers in Alexander County are testing with the exception of Urgent Care of Mountain View.

Doug Gillispie, Public Services Director, stated that fit testing for N95 masks would take place later this week for EMS/Emergency Management staff, Sheriff's deputies/detectives, Animal Services officers, Taylorsville Police officers, Detention officers, and any Health Department employees who have not already been fitted. He also mentioned that N95 and PAPR masks were currently available on all ambulances and that more PAPR masks had been ordered; however, they may not be delivered until late summer due to increased demand.

Ms. Whisnant reported that masks were available at DSS and the Health Department for sick clients. In addition, she stated that to date, about half of the childcare facilities in the county have chosen to remain open with restrictions (daily screening/monitoring, no visitors, children picked up at the door instead of inside, extra cleaning efforts). Adult care facilities are refusing visitors with the exception of those required by DHHS/DSS or medical providers.

Billie Walker, Assistant Health Director, informed the Board of an agreement with the School System to utilize parking areas at ACHS as an outdoor triage center for mass testing and vaccination if needed. Mr. Gillispie noted that the Community Emergency Response Team could assist with traffic flow.

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed Alexander County Government closings and restrictions through April 1st as follows:

- Close all Senior Center locations, County parks including Rocky Face Park, the Services Center (tax payments can be made by drive-thru lanes), and Library locations (citizens should utilize drop boxes and staff can provide curbside book/movie delivery). All employees will report to work but buildings will be closed to the public; however, citizens may call or email departments for assistance, to schedule meetings, or arrange services, etc.
- Congregate meal sites will be closed and meals will be delivered to recipients.

- RockyFest will be cancelled as well as other festivals or events where large crowds are anticipated.
- No visitors will be allowed at EMS bases.
- Per NCDOT/NCDMV restrictions, the License Plate Agency will limit the number of clients in the lobby to 10 at a time.
- Per NCSU restrictions, Cooperative Extension will operate with two staff members each day on a rotating schedule.
- Individuals communicating with Environmental Health and Building Inspections on the job site should be limited to one.
- All Parks & Recreation games/events have been postponed.
- Training sessions for large groups will be suspended.
- Payroll summary sheets should be submitted to the Finance Department via email to limit traffic through the Administration Building.
- No work-related out-of-county travel will be allowed with the exception of EMS and law enforcement.
- Employees with cold, cough, fever, and/or flu symptoms should stay home.
- Employees with immune-compromising health issues should communicate with their department head and discuss options for their safety.

He also stated that signage had been placed on all County buildings asking the public to refrain from entering if they are sick and providing phone numbers to each department located within. Other plans include a radio spot, press releases, and Code Red messages to citizens. Staff will monitor the situation on April 1st to determine further action.

STAFF / BOARD DISCUSSION

Chairman Mayberry discussed the similarities and differences between COVID-19 and H1N1 in 2009, noting the importance of informing the public to stay calm but take the situation seriously, heed warnings and restrictions put into place by the government, and protect themselves.

Commissioner Pennell felt the County should be proactive and take any steps necessary to protect the citizens, pointing out that the fatality rate for COVID-19 was much higher than influenza.

Ms. Whisnant and Ms. Walker recommended older citizens or those with underlying health conditions to stay home as much as possible but pointed out that friends/family members running

errands for these individuals should not go into the home due to the possibility of having the virus without exhibiting symptoms.

APPROVAL OF CPT CODE / BILLING

Ms. Whisnant requested approval of CPT Code 87635 related to COVID-19 testing/services as well as \$240 (20% over cost for billing). Chairman Mayberry made a motion to approve the CPT code and billing amount as well as any further urgent codes/pricing needed by the Health Department in relation to COVID-19. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

STATE OF EMERGENCY PROCLAMATION

Chairman Mayberry inquired about plans to declare a State of Emergency in Alexander County. Mr. Gillispie felt a State of Emergency was not necessary at this time and Ms. Whisnant agreed.

Chairman Mayberry felt the Board should move forward with declaring a State of Emergency prior to confirmation of a positive test. Commissioner Pennell agreed. Commissioner Peal was also in agreement but felt a statement should accompany the declaration explaining that this action was proactive in nature to increase awareness and reduce the spread of the virus.

Vice-Chairman Yoder was not opposed to declaring a State of Emergency but felt the Board should act when recommended by County staff who were trained to make these types of decisions.

Chairman Mayberry made a motion to declare a State of Emergency in Alexander County. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed 4 in favor (Commissioners Mayberry, Peal, Pennell, and Reese) and one against (Commissioner Yoder). The motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Mayberry made a motion to adjourn at 1:33 PM. Commissioner Pennell the motion, which passed unanimously.

Ryan N. Mayberry, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board