



Emmet County News Release

For immediate release – March 17, 2020

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Emmet County Officials Working on Continuity of Services Plan; Some Changes Already in Effect

Emmet County government and county emergency services are working together with other local partners and state officials to develop procedures and actionable information for the public regarding the COVID-19 outbreak.

Acting County Administrator Michael Reaves reports, “For the past several days, I have been in constant contact with our county commissioners as we monitor what’s happening with the fast-changing situation regarding the COVID-19 outbreak. Our number one priority is the well-being and safety of the people living and working in Emmet County. Though we are making plans in conjunction with other local agencies, the situation continues to evolve. We are working now to finalize a plan for a continuity of county operations plan should we need to take further steps to protect the health of our community and allow our local emergency responders and healthcare providers to do their jobs.”

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC), state and local health departments, and other state agencies have been distributing information about the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, with the goal of educating the public about each person’s responsibility in helping to limit its transmission. Taking the necessary steps now to prevent a sudden increase in those infected will reduce the demand on health care providers, hospitals, and other medical facilities.

With Governor Gretchen Whitmer’s recent declaration of a State of Emergency along with several executive orders, Emmet County departments are now making the required adjustments to comply. Commissioners have instructed Reaves to work with department heads to lay out a plan so that as many county services as possible can continue over the next several weeks. After all department leaders have weighed in, the county will post that information to its website and county Facebook page.

Commissioner chair Bill Shorter and co-chair Toni Drier met with Reaves late last week and came up with recommendations to county staff concerning travel, including directives to self-quarantine for those who must travel outside the local area. Employees throughout the county buildings have significantly stepped up efforts to keep surfaces sanitized and education material has been distributed within the county building on best hygiene practices to reduce exposure to the virus.

In complying with the governor’s orders, there have already been changes made to how the courts and some departments are handling regular activity. The following is an update on the current status of various aspects of county operations:

Emmet County Building/Courthouse – County buildings are open at this time. However, visitors will be asked some screening questions prior to entry into the county building downtown. Please do not come to the buildings if you are sick or have possibly been exposed to the virus as you will not be permitted to enter. Residents and others needing to conduct business at the county buildings are encouraged to call or email the relevant department first to see if you can be helped without making a trip in person.

Emmet County Jail – All non-essential jail programs have been suspended until further notice, including inmate visitation at the jail and work crews.

Emmet County Sheriff's Office – All operations are continuing as normal at this time.

Emmet County EMS – All EMS staff are being monitored continuously for signs of any symptoms associated with the virus. Personnel are receiving body temperature checks before entering hospitals or other healthcare facilities, including nursing homes.

90th District Court – For the next 30 days, the court will hold no criminal or civil jury trials and no small claims hearings. Adjournment of other proceedings will be evaluated upon request. All in-person reporting for probation has been suspended at this time. There will also be no weddings conducted for at least the next 30 days. Contact the court with any questions at (231) 348-1750.

57th Circuit Court – If you have any symptoms associated with COVID-19, have been exposed to COVID-19, or believe you may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, please contact the court to request an adjournment of your case. The court may grant adjournment for 30 days. Adjournment requests will be handled on a case by case basis, but liberally granted where warranted. Contact Court Administrator Cheryl Fitzgerald, (231) 348-1741.

7th Probate Court – No jury trials will be scheduled in the next 30 days. If a jury trial must be held, prospective jurors are advised to request to be excused and reassigned if they have any symptoms associated with COVID-19, have been exposed to COVID-19 or believe they may have been exposed. The Court encourages use of telephone, Polycom, or other technology whenever possible to reduce the need for personal appearances. All pretrial/scheduling conferences will be by phone unless otherwise ordered. All attorneys and litigants are instructed to immediately contact the court and seek an adjournment of any scheduled proceeding if a person who would need to be in attendance for the proceeding has any symptoms associated with COVID-19, has been exposed to COVID-19, or believes they may have been exposed. Contact Court Administrator Lisa Muneio, (231) 348-1766.

Friend of the Court - All referee hearings are canceled until April 30 and will be rescheduled as soon as possible. All face-to-face meetings currently scheduled at the FOC office are canceled and will be rescheduled by phone if possible. Clients may contact the FOC by phone at (231) 348-1717, in writing, or by email at FOC@emmetcounty.org. Staff also requests that support payments be paid over the phone by debit or credit card whenever possible though payments will still be accepted at the lobby window.

Emmet County building or room rentals canceled – All rental agreements scheduled for the next 30 days at any county park or other county facility have been canceled. County staff will be contacting all persons or groups who have reserved a space or building to discuss. A decision about reservations after April 15 will be made at a later date.

County Clerk's Office – All services are continuing as normal at this time except the clerk's office is not doing fingerprinting and therefore cannot process new applications for Concealed Pistol License (CPL). Those wishing to renew a CPL can still do so online.

Equalization/GIS – All services are continuing as normal at this time.

Pellston Regional Airport – Airlines are continuing to operate flights as normal at this time though that is subject to change at any time. Availability to use the airport's upstairs conference room for meetings has been suspended until at least the end of March. The airport's restaurant, Hoppies Landing, has closed its dining area upon orders from the governor, but carryout is still available. Call Hoppies at (231) 539-8900 for times of service.

Planning, Zoning, Construction Resources – All services are continuing as normal at this time.

Prosecuting Attorney's Office – All services are continuing as normal at this time.

Public Works (Recycling/Waste) – All services are continuing as normal at this time.

Register of Deeds – All services are continuing as normal at this time.

Veterans Affairs – The department is not accepting walk-in visitors until further notice. Please call (231) 348-1780 to discuss your matter and/or to possibly schedule an appointment.

For more information about the COVID-19 outbreak, please visit the state's website at www.michigan.gov/coronavirus or the CDC's website at www.cdc.gov. Emmet County will have its own information page on its website, www.emmetcounty.org, by Thursday, March 19.