



# GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY

## REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

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**MEETING DATE:** April 1, 2020

**DEPARTMENT:** Administration

**SUBMITTED BY:** Nate Alger, County Administrator

**SUBJECT:** Administrator's Report

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**RECOMMENDATION:**  
Information

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**SUMMARY:**

Administrator's COVID-19 Update

**ATTACHMENTS:**

[March 30 2020 COVID 2019 update \(1\)](#)



**GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY  
ADMINISTRATION OFFICE  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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ADMINISTRATION 231-922-4780  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS 231-922-4797

March 30, 2020

To: Grand Traverse County Board of Commissioners  
From: Nate Alger, County Administrator *NA*  
RE: COVID-19 response

**Community Response Activity**

The first human cases of COVID-19 were identified in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province, in December of 2019. Since then, health officials across the world have been monitoring the spread of the virus that has resulted in more than 608,000 cases worldwide at the time of preparing this memo. The first case of COVID-19 was reported in the United States on January 20, 2020. There are now more than a 100,000 cases in the United States and 1,711 deaths reported at the time of preparing this memo. In Michigan, there are over 5,000 reported cases and 130 deaths. For Grand Traverse County, there are 7 confirmed cases and no deaths.

Since then, the Health Department and various supervisors and department heads have begun planning in the event that Grand Traverse County was impacted by the spread of the disease. The Health Department's focus has been centered on mitigating the spread in the community and providing expert guidance to Administration as well.

On March 13, 2020, after consultation with the Health Department, we opened a Joint Operation Center (JOC) at 5:30 p.m. Thirty-five community leaders representing various municipalities, authorities, non-profits, and other organizations began to discuss the community response to COVID-19. We agreed that no one organization or entity could manage the community response alone and all of us needed to work together. Since then, the group has evolved from the initial 35 participants to nearly 100 participants today. We meet every day at 10:00 a.m., with some essential personnel meeting at the Governmental Center, but most participating remotely through Google Hangouts. There are usually around 60-70 people participating on a daily basis.

One of the main purposes of the JOC is to develop and send out a single message that reflects the largest community concern on a daily basis. We develop the daily message after receiving verbal updates from the Health Department, Munson Medical Center, the Emergency Operation Center, and Emergency Support Functions including Child Care, Food Distribution, Homelessness, Volunteers, Seniors, and Communications. The Communication team creates the message and shares that with Wendy Hirschenberger and me for approval prior to it being released. That message is then shared across the community by the various members of the JOC.



RECYCLED PAPER



On March 13th, I engaged Lake Effect, a local web design and on-line marketing firm, and requested them to create a County website and Facebook page so we could share COVID-19 information with our community from a single platform. The "GTCOUNTY COVID-19" website and Facebook page were up and running in a few days and we have been sharing valuable updates and information via these sites. Also, thanks to a generous offer by Lamar Advertising in Traverse City, we have billboards around the area directing community members to our GTCOUNTY COVID-19 website.

We opened a COVID-19 response fund to track expenditures related to the County's response to the spread of the virus. We believe that some if not all of these expenditures will be subject to reimbursement from FEMA. As you know, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as the now well-known N95 mask are in high demand and in short supply. On March 27, 2020, I authorized the purchase of 10,000 N95 masks and expect that those masks will be here within 5 to 7 days.

We are working on a daily basis with our community partners to address their individual concerns and needs while we continue to balance the county's response efforts with the safety of our community and our employees.

Our Health Officer, Wendy Hirschenberger will be providing additional information in a separate document and will be available for the meeting on Wednesday.

### **Organizational Activity**

March 16, 2020- We closed all county buildings to unscheduled public access and disseminated information to the public that our services would be available by phone/email and online. We also sent notice to employees regarding the risk associated with travel and quarantine possibilities. This letter stated that employees travelling out of the area by vehicle or public transit may be required to self-quarantine upon their return for 14 days prior to their return to work.

March 20, 2020- The Board of Commissioners held their first virtual meeting and approved the "Emergency Operations Plan for the step down of county services due to community spread of COVID-19". Since March 20th we have met regularly and have had consistent communication about the ongoing situation as it relates to the balance of county services being provided and the safety of our employees.

March 23, 2020- Responding to Governor Whitmer's Executive Order 2020-21, Administration worked with Elected Officials and Department Heads to identify services provided and the associated staff that are critical to sustain and protect life, and thus should continue to work in County buildings and conduct in person business. I am pleased to say that we received feedback from all Elected Offices and Departments about their individual plans to manage their staff and continue to provide the necessary services. We are working with the Health Department and leaning on the accumulated experience of those statewide and nationally in our decision making process.



We have received guidance from the Michigan Association of Counties (MAC), the County's Labor Counsel Cohl Stoker and Toskey, and our Prosecuting Attorney's Office on how to best comply with Executive Order 2020-21. It is safe to assume that as we go through the next couple of weeks, there will be continued review and modification to departmental operational plans in order to stay compliant with the Executive Order.

March 25, 2020- We moved all GT County employees to Phase 2 of the Emergency Operations Plan for the step down of county services due to community spread of COVID-19. In addition to the closure of all county facilities to unscheduled public access we:

- Identified those employees that can work from home and had them do so.
- For those employees that could not work from home we requested that they do so in compliance with social distancing and mitigation measures recommended by the CDC and the Governor's Executive Order.
- We told the supervisors to do what they reasonably could to provide for those social distancing and mitigation measures by creating flexible schedules and creating barriers. We have also employed additional cleaning and disinfectant efforts to those buildings where essential staff are working.
- We have provided for the allowance for those staff that have been determined to be non-essential to take time off with or without pay.
- We are in the process of identifying new essential services and are in the process of determining which employees may be reassigned to ensure the needed services are being provided.
- Human resources has been tasked with identifying those employees who may be subject to lay off/recall. We have also worked with our labor attorney on how to approach the layoff process if we get to that point.

March 30, 2020- Due to several concerns the Administrative team has met and began discussing further reducing the number of employees that report to work. As we continue to balance the need to provide services with the safety of our employees, we recognize that certain factors will have influence on our decision making process. Factors such as an increasing number of COVID -19 cases in our community, the first case of community spread, and the increasing concern from our Departments and Elected Officials, we will likely take the next step to reduce the number of employees coming into the buildings.

To that end, we have discussed the option of layoff and recall. Prior to engaging in layoffs we have to give employees notice that they may be subject to a layoff. Depending on the employee this notice must either be 7 or 10 days ahead of any potential layoff. If the decision is to move forward with our Emergency Operations Plan for the step down of county services due to community spread of COVID-19, we must send those notices out, regardless if we ultimately engage in any layoffs or not. At this time, we do not see the need to lay any employee off and I am not recommending that we consider layoffs at this time, but the notices being sent out satisfies the requirements of noticing specific employees in the event we need to take this drastic step. This at least provides us the option if this situation draws beyond what is foreseeable. Thirty two notices were sent out on March 31, 2020.

#### Additional compensation for employees required to work

As requested, the Administrative Team has been working together in an attempt to identify if and how we could pay additional compensation to employees that are required to be present at



County offices. I have asked for assistance from those that would be impacted and have that following an online discussion with the MAC and the various counties throughout the state. We have initial thoughts on how we could pay additional compensation to those employees that are required to conduct in person business, however, we do not have a final determination to present to the Board of Commissioners at this time. We will be meeting with the Elected Officials and Department Heads that will be impacted and will provide you a recommendation as soon as possible.

#### Emergency Family Medical Leave Act and the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act

On March 18, 2020 the President signed the Emergency Family Medical Leave Act (EFMLA) and the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (EPSLA) into law. These two Acts go into effect on April 1, 2020 and will provide enhanced time off with pay for those employees who are impacted by COVID-19. H.R. Director Donna Kinsey has written a policy to address the EFMLA and the EPSLA and inform the staff about the new legislation. This policy is in the Board packet for your approval. It also is attached to this memo.

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I want to thank each of you for your support through this challenging time. If you have questions or concerns please contact at your leisure.

As of 3/30/2020 Grand Traverse County Health Department has had tests results from 151 residents reported to the Health Department including 107 negatives, 7 positives and 37 tests pending results. Testing is approved through a medical provider and Munson Medical Center facilitates the testing either inpatient or at its drive through sample collection site. Testing capabilities in Michigan have expanded, but there are still criteria for testing from the state health department. As test results are provided the Health Department initiates a complete case investigation including contact tracing. Each case is different and some investigations are straight forward, while others require more follow-up. The Health department then directs the ill person and any contacts to isolate or quarantine and monitors them throughout the process.

Additionally, the Health Department is continuously responding to community partner needs and planning for future needs. Below is a summary of our activities based upon Incident Command Role:

#### **Incident Command**

- Maintain daily numbers of cases in Michigan and Grand Traverse County
- Maintain awareness of testing happening in community and implications of tests in high risk areas (nursing homes, medical workers etc)
- Provide daily updates to Joint Operations Center and other community partners as needed
- Provide daily key messages for all communications out of health department and Joint Operations Center
- Participate in daily calls with state health department, health officers and Munson Medical Center Incident command
- Hold daily incident command meetings to direct all aspects of public health response
- Provide specific guidance for various COVID-19 scenarios for County and Community partners
- Direct planning for next phases of response to reduce community transmission, track local transmission, mass fatality planning and surge capacity for medical community

#### **Liaison/Planning Officer**

- Representative of Local Health Department in the Grand Traverse County Emergency Operations Center
- Working in conjunction with Logistics Branch and Emergency Management to oversee the current Personal Protective Equipment Supply and Distribution to identified COVID 19 frontline response entities
- Serving as the point of contact between local public health and first response entities regarding positive COVID 19 cases in the county
- Coordination of local health department imposed Isolation and Quarantine strategies for the local health department
- Awaiting further information/instruction from the state Health Department regarding future shipments of PPE into the county
- Serving as one of the Health Department representatives during Joint Operations Center and Munson Incident Command daily briefings



### **Medical Director**

- Available for consultation re quarantine decisions and employee safety recommendations.
- Monitoring Munson's communication with providers to keep abreast of their policies and concerns.
- Contributing to the hospital's planning for the expected COVID wave, particularly with regard to planning for prioritizing critical scarce resources like ventilators.
- Keeping abreast of the literature re the epidemiology and management of the virus from worldwide down to local perspectives.

### **Safety/Infection Control Officer**

- Implemented specific strategies to preserve the health of our workforce and the critical resources of PPE, such as sanitation stations throughout the work area, propped open internal doors, increased wiping down commonly touched areas, and guidance for facemasks.
- Monitoring usage rate for SANI CLOTH wipes, gloves, masks
- All employees are required to remain off the work site if they have symptoms of fever, cough, malaise, and mild cold/flu symptoms.
- Staff are to report to safety/infection control officer any symptoms requiring isolation at home
- "Recovery Room" established on site to dedicate space for staff recovery, time out, recharging, maintaining level heads, etc.
- Daily email to update staff regarding infection control issues
- Monitoring guidance from CDC, MDHHS and MMC relative to safety and infection control

### **Public Information Officer**

- Continual update of information posted on the website; including numbers of cases, answering of questions, and Persons Under Investigation form and guidelines for Physicians for website.
- Testing guideline changes sent to Primary Care Physicians via blast fax.
- Posting of COVID-19 relevant information from GTCHD, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and sharing of GTCountycovid19.com (aka JOC) posts.
- Answering questions from internal staff, the media, the public, organizations, and other local health departments, regarding what GTCHD is doing with respect to the COVID-19 in our area.
- Drafting and sending of Constant Contact email lists where/when applicable.
- Media Coordination and identification of subject matter experts for interviews.
- Supervision of media interviews and preparation of talking points.
- Producing and sending out of press releases.
- Policing social media and media interviews for incorrect information.

### **COVID-19 Operations Section**

Operations Section functions with leadership of two branches of the Incident Command and active 7 days/week.

- Emergency Response Branch
  - Initial Case Task Force is a team of regularly staffed and trained Public Health Nurses for Communicable Disease program, daily staffing has increased as needed to respond. Currently staffed with 3-4 employees daily.

- Monitoring Call Center Task Force set up complete work stations for 10 Public Health Nurses and Mid-Level providers to staff for communication with close contacts of positive COVID-19 cases, follow-up reports of symptoms/temperature checks for close contacts or returning travelers in quarantine, and to provide instruction and education.
- Just-In-Time ½ day education provided to public health professionals who have not previously worked in the Communicable Disease program initiated 3/30/2020 AM.
- Information line active for community close contact return calls.
- Staffing model implemented for 7 day per week operation with all staff assigned on a rotation schedule.
- Essential Services or Staffing Branch
  - Essential public health services that can be transitioned to tele-appointments have been with regular check-ins with active clients by phone.
  - Urgent medically necessary appointments are triaged on the phone and services that can be offered as drive-up are and precautions are taken for in-person visits which include client screening and use of proper personal protective equipment
  - Program staff are being trained and readied for use in the Emergency Response when needed for case investigations, contact tracing or daily monitoring of cases.

## **Logistics Section**

- Logistics section set up a system to inventory and distribute personal protective equipment (PPE) to community partners not affiliated with Munson Medical Center. These partners include local EMS, Fire, Law Enforcement, Nursing Homes, Adult Foster Care Homes, Physicians Offices, and Shelters. Distribution began late last week and will continue as long as PPE is in stock.
- A press release was sent out asking for PPE. Several local businesses and organizations have donated PPE The Traverse Bay ISD donated a large amount of PPE from the Career Tech Center.
- A Google Form was set up to request PPE. Requests are immediately posted to a spreadsheet and then evaluated to determine the amount of PPE that can be approved. Priority is given to EMS and others involved in Direct Patient Care.
- Once requests are approved, Environmental Health staff are filling the orders from existing PPE stock at the Health Department. Environmental Health staff are delivering the PPE directly to the site of the request.
- Logistics has been working with IT to fulfill requests for laptops, VPN, and cell phones.
- Logistics worked with IT to set up a six phone call center to assist the Health Department with contact tracing.
- Logistics staff have been contacting local motels to solicit potential quarantine and isolation sites. A spreadsheet has been created to compile information regarding motels willing to house individuals if needed.



## **Finance & Administration Section**

- Created separate cost center starting March 2, 2020 to account for any time specifically spent on Coronavirus for tracking purposes
- Reviewing Medicaid and Private Insurance information for telehealth options
- Changing policies, procedures, guidelines to maintain HIPAA compliance, payroll, communication, and supervision when staff are working from home setting
- Participate in County COVID-19 task force