



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 13, 2020

FAYETTE COUNTY DECLARES PROACTIVE STATE OF EMERGENCY

Uniontown, PA – Fayette County Commissioners on Friday officially declared a countywide state of emergency as a proactive response to the worldwide Coronavirus pandemic.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Coronavirus, also known in the United States as COVID-19, is a highly contagious virus that can cause cold- and flu-like symptoms on a wide scale, as well as lead to death in severe cases.

Although the virus has not been detected in Fayette County, commissioners Dave Lohr, Vince Vicites and Scott Dunn are working with all county officials to prepare for a potential future outbreak.

Commissioners maintain that the health and safety of those who live and work in or visit Fayette County is paramount.

They are actively monitoring the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation across the United States, and are referring to Fayette County's Emergency Management Agency and its network of medical professionals to coordinate appropriate responses and prevention efforts.

As of noon Friday, the CDC reported 1,629 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the United States, including 6 confirmed and 27 presumptive cases in Pennsylvania. Nationwide, 41 Coronavirus-related deaths have been confirmed.

On Wednesday, commissioners participated in a conference call with White House officials in Washington D.C., to receive federal updates on the pandemic. On Friday, President Donald Trump declared a national state of emergency in response to COVID-19.

Also on Friday, Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf ordered all Pennsylvania school districts to cancel classes for two weeks, beginning March 16.

According to Fayette County Solicitor Jack Purcell, declaring a state of emergency will preemptively bolster the county's efforts to seek critical funding, should extensive action against the virus be necessary in the future.

In an effort to minimize the gathering of large crowds, commissioners will combine their March agenda and voting meetings into one session. The March 17 meeting is canceled, and all county business will be conducted March 19.

All non-essential items will be removed from the agenda, including the vote on the proposed Second Amendment Ordinance. All proclamations scheduled for March will be postponed and issued at a later date.

All future meetings and events will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Internally, Fayette County's department heads, sheriff's department, security and prison staff, buildings and grounds department, and others have been receiving regular updates to help mitigate the spread of the virus.

County employees are being encouraged to stay home if they are feeling ill; and to communicate internally and with the public via electronic means, as much as possible. Employee travel will also be limited.

Commissioners are actively developing a complete plan for county employees and operations, as a precaution.

Fayette EMA/911 is receiving daily updates from Pennsylvania's Emergency Management Agency and Department of Health. They have updated their emergency medical dispatch protocols for future COVID-19 screenings.

Beginning Friday, all visitation at the Fayette County Jail has been suspended for two weeks; at which time, the suspension will be reevaluated upon assessment of the COVID-19 situation. Inmates will have access to extended telephone time and tablets for virtual visits.

Commissioners are encouraging all Fayette County residents to engage in the CDC's recommended behaviors for mitigating COVID-19's spread, including:

- Vigorous hand washing.
- Avoidance of facial touching.
- Sneezing or coughing into cloths or elbows.
- Social distancing from crowds.

If you suspect you have been in contact with someone infected or are exhibiting signs of illness, you are encouraged to stay home and avoid contact with others. The federal government has identified the elderly and chronically ill as those most at-risk of contracting the virus.

For more information on the Coronavirus, including symptoms, treatments and outbreak updates, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov. For regular updates, visit www.facebook.com/fcema911 or www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

###

This communication is part of the Fayette County PR Initiative, which is funded through the Fayette County Local Share Account (LSA) and Hotel Tax Grants in cooperation with the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette, The Redstone Foundation and other partners. This funding has been designated for the continued promotion and marketing of Fayette County, PA.

For more information, contact Kristi Rooker Kassimer, Public Relations Specialist, at 412-691-0262, kkassimer@fayettecountypa.info or Kaylie Moore, Journalist, at 724-317-6924,

kmoore@fayettecountypa.info