

Dear County Residents,

We realize that the current Coronavirus pandemic is causing a great deal of anxiety and concern. Concerns about school closings, job issues and where to find basic necessities is making daily life more difficult. Life as we know it has changed and will remain different for weeks to come. No one knows how long these changes will have to stay in place. We do know that the more everyone works together to stop the spread of the disease, the more quickly life will return to normal.

The leadership of the county and city and their partners are working together to implement plans that have been in place for a number of years as well as developing new plans to address the different challenges this particular virus has caused. The decision to issue an Emergency Declaration by the County was to provide clear guidance on what is expected of our community, acknowledge this is an emergency situation and open up resources to support the response of our government entities. We are trying to provide the most up to date information available, but information is changing very quickly. The Pettis County Health Center and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services along with the CDC are the best places to look for correct, factual information. There is a lot of misinformation circulating around social media.

One major area of concern is related to testing for the Coronavirus. There has been a lot of information from the Federal government that testing will be widely available. There are more tests available than when testing began. Testing is for people who are ill with a fever of 100.4, cough, shortness of breath and a risk factor including travel to specific countries and counties or direct contact with a person who has a lab confirmed case of Coronavirus. When drive through testing becomes available, we will let the community know where and how to obtain the test. New testing facilities are coming on line quickly. There should be enough testing materials available by April 1. Please be patient – people are being tested based on symptoms, not who they are. If you feel you have symptoms, please call your doctor before going to the office. Do not go to the Emergency Room unless you are seriously ill.

If you are told that you may have been exposed to the virus and are sent home, that means you need to stay IN YOUR HOME for 14 days. This does not mean going to the store or visiting with friends. If you need help with getting groceries or medicines, reach out to friends and families who may be able to take care of those items. We are working on setting up a telephone line for community residents to call if there is no one else who can help you get what you need.

As the guidance from Governor Parsons regarding public gathering is changing we are following the first guidance he outlined. However, if at all possible, groups should be limited to 10 people until the end of March. Listed below is what needs to happen

1. All events that would have more than 50 people are to be cancelled or rescheduled. This includes meetings, weddings, concerts, plays, event barns/venues, social clubs and fund raising events. We are asking businesses to work with customers who must reschedule events. Please support the important charitable organizations that had fundraisers scheduled during the next several months.
2. The Governor's direction does not include schools, child care facilities and businesses. However, restaurants and bars are considered public gathering spaces which are addressed separately. Those organizations will make closing decisions based on information from state agencies and public health officials. All of these organizations are working with public health about closures decisions.
3. Restaurants and bars need to limit the number of people in the facility to 50 or less at a time. There should be encouragement for patrons to wash their hands. For those restaurants that can, takeout and delivery should be used as much as possible. All restaurants should remove items that are touched by multiple people such as ketchup bottles, salt and pepper and other common items. Menus should be cleaned between customers. We have been asked to do this for at least the next 15 days.

When shopping, please consider local shops. Some of our local businesses have on line shopping options. We want our businesses to survive and be there when life returns to normal. Please do not buy more than you need. We need to have enough food and necessities for all of our community.

We all need to continue to do those things that help keep us safe – stay home if you are sick, wash your hands frequently, avoid touching your face, eyes and mouth, stay home as much as possible. Staying home is very important for those over 65 years of age, have chronic illnesses or have a decreased immune system. Please do not go to visit people in the hospital if you are sick. The hospital is closed to visitors. However, please do call and check on your family and neighbors to ensure they have what they need such as medicines and food.

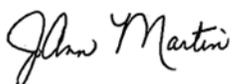
This pandemic will pass – we just do not know how long it will take. Everyone will need to be patient as we all learn to live with a slower pace of life. Take time to catch up with people you have been meaning to call, write a letter or send a card to brighten the day of another, talk to your family. Try to view this as the pause in a busy life not something that is impossible to live with.



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Pettis County Presiding Commissioner



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