

Board of Supervisor's Presentation  
Status Report COVID-19  
(Presented by Neil Morgan, County Administrator)

---

Good Evening. Tonight I'd like to update the Board and the citizens watching on the COVID-19 situation on the Peninsula and in York County. On behalf of staff I want to thank the BOS and the citizens for your patience and support during this unprecedented experience. First we acknowledge the twenty three Peninsula individuals that have lost their lives to the Coronavirus. Know that our hearts and prayers go out to the families and friends impacted by the disease. As of yesterday, there have been a total of 384 individuals on the Peninsula who

have contracted the disease. We wish them well and hope for a speedy recovery.

In a very brief period of time, a great deal has changed and continues to change on a daily and sometimes hourly basis.

Today the U.S. has become the epicenter of the virus with approximately 27% of all of the world's reported cases. The Peninsula and York County have not been immune, in fact on some charts we were designated a hot spot. The virus has created physical, emotional and financial impacts for so many.

There is some good news. Health experts in Virginia believe that COVID related hospitalizations on the Virginia Peninsula may be declining, and indication that all of our efforts at social distancing

are paying off. For tonight's update, let's start with a quick review of the emergency declarations taken at the federal, state and local level as a result of the virus's presence, then we'll talk specifically about what we as a community have done and what we are planning for in the future.

## **What we know**

Now, moving forward lets briefly review the timeline of events.

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic.

March 12, 2020, Governor Northam issued Executive Order Fifty-

One declaring a state of emergency for the Commonwealth of

Virginia arising from the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

pandemic.

March 13, 2020, the President of the United States declared a

national emergency, beginning March 1, 2020, in response to the

spread of COVID-19.

March 17, 2020, the Board confirmed the declaration of local emergency made by the local director of emergency management on March 13, as modified on March 17, 2020.

March 30, 2020, Governor Northam signed Executive Order 55, a Temporary Stay At Home, and reinforced Executive Orders 51 and 53 which remain in effect until June 10 unless rescinded by the Governor. Some specific Virginia restrictions on gatherings apply until May 8.

### **What we've done**

My updates relate to three categories; governance, finance and the emergency itself. For simplicity I'll attempt to keep us in that framework tonight.

With regard to governance:

It's because of the hard work of staff we are able to have this meeting tonight on this platform. I'd like to specifically offer my thanks to our Information Technology Department, the County Administration staff as well as the County Attorney's Office for the diligence, hard work, and hours of set up and testing to make this happen. With all of this now done, a virtual meeting has taken place for the EDA and is being arranged for the Planning Commission, as well as others.

Those at home watching, who may have just tuned in, earlier tonight the Board approved four ordinances related to the disaster. The first allows us to hold electronic meetings of this type. The second gives our residents the incentive to do business with us online during the pandemic by waiving the convenience fees for online payments and some temporary interest rate relief. And lastly an ordinance ratified by the BOS endorsing the closure of public facilities.

**Finances:**

Previously, I shared with you our initial financial response to the pandemic which includes freezing all non-critical open positions; placing on hold the current year CIP projects in order to conserve

cash for future needs; and scrutinizing in greater detail all operational expenses - if they are not essential they are not allowed.

None of these financial measures, and other now necessary reductions in expenses were included in the proposed FY21 budget summary I presented in March. So tonight, before the budget public hearing I will present our FY21 revisions. These revisions are a result of the hard work of County Department leaders and Constitutional officers across the organization, working with Finance under very difficult circumstances and tight deadlines. These budget changes were shared with the Board and posted on the website prior to tonight's meeting and we have

established phone lines as Chairman Green explained to enable citizens to offer their comments.

I continue a dialogue with the schools. Dr. Shandor, Theresa Owens, Bill Bowen and I continue to share information on our respective financial situations as they develop. As you might expect we continue to collaborate on budget development for both organizations with the intent of looking to the Board's priorities.

**Actions as a result of the Medical Emergency:**

Early on we established a COVID-19 task force, composed of employees across County Departments/functions including the York County School Division, to monitor the spread of the disease

and develop contingencies. This group helped us with identifying the facilities that needed to be closed first, including the Senior Center and the libraries. This group was able to, early on, help us understand the impact on employees, identify resources and needs to make telecommuting an option, and establish new procedures. Best of all, they offered us a way to measure the pulse of the employees. This interdepartmental group recently completed its work developing a phased reopening scenario I shared with the BOS yesterday. Since then I have added a couple of additional smaller task force groups—Human Resources that has been monitoring the CARES ACT and taking the lead in employee policy updates. There is also a Finance task force,

tracking purchasing and expenses, procedures, and long-range impacts.

Facilities started closing to the public on March 16<sup>th</sup> and staff has been alternating their days in the office and working from home in order to accomplish social distancing. I am pleased, for all of our sakes, this has worked reasonably well. But as summer weather approaches, it is not easy to see our waterfront empty of recreation and retail activity. With the Governor's Stay At Home Order, County Departments have had to be innovative in their delivery of service, from holding our live Library Story Time Sessions via Facebook to issuing online library cards. We have been promoting the use of drop boxes for documents and checks,

along with our internal and external meetings all conducted thru teleconferencing. The technology aspect has been a good story for us. We were from the onset of the pandemic in a strong technology stance due to the Board's strategic priorities. We believe this stance on technology has allowed us to be very responsive in this crisis. IT staff was quickly able to transition many of our staff to work on a secure network from home; implement broad use of teleconferencing; and utilize a mobile app routing calls through the County's phone network to mobile phones, making the experience seamless to residents calling office numbers.

For our residents, in addition to the closing of play grounds and the beach, there are a few operational changes that have been especially impactful. Our Visit Yorktown efforts have largely been put on hold, but I am happy to report that Yorktown Market Days will return this Saturday with some changes. The market will move to the MAC and be pre-order and pickup only. While we look forward to getting back to full markets at the waterfront, we have had a very positive response to this approach, one that many other markets in the area are using. We expect to welcome our concerts and seasonal events back as soon as it is safe to do so.

The other significant operational inconvenience is at the Transfer station and our VPPSA service. Two weeks ago VPSSA, under

the Governor's Executive Order, shut its compost facility down and yard debris collection. What a terrible decision and we *ALL* got calls. I am happy to report that our Public Works staff has stepped in to man the drop-offs and we continue to promote the County's curbside pickup service as well as stay vigilant on the trash pickup operation which, due to everyone staying home, is quite heavy for this time of year.

While our citizens are sheltering in place, our Office of Economic Development has been busy putting together resources for our businesses to help them navigate the crisis by closely following the SBA and CARES Act offerings for grants and business support, and updating their pages with links and sharing them on

social media. Economic Development staff also put together a very robust listing of local restaurants and retail businesses that are open, including hours and operation details. All of these resources can be accessed through the County webpage and the Economic Development website.

One thing that is working well during this crisis is the regional cooperation. Specifically on the Peninsula we started with a commitment to work together and continue to meet virtually at least once or twice a week. Our Public Safety, Public Affairs and the CAO's have A LOT of conference calls, but they are very helpful and cooperation seems to be at an all-time high! You may have seen the videoconference with Dr. Julian, acting director of

the VA Department of Health, an idea initiated by James City County, in which we all participated and was set up to answer citizen questions. That videoconference call, plus most of the information I have shared here tonight, is available on our website. I am very confident this level of cooperation will continue during our recovery efforts. With that let me get to the main event—our revised FY21 Proposed Budget.