

# Clackamas County Commissioners' Town Hall

## April 16, 2020

### Summary Q&A

**Topic:** COVID-19

**Commissioners:** Chair Jim Bernard  
Commissioner Sonya Fischer  
Commissioner Ken Humberston  
Commissioner Paul Savas  
Commissioner Martha Schrader

**Guests:** #ClackCo Administrator Gary Schmidt  
#ClackCo Health Housing & Human Services Director Richard Swift  
#ClackCo Business & Community Services Director Laura Zentner  
#ClackCo EOC Incident Co-Commander Philip Mason-Joyner

During the coronavirus pandemic, Clackamas County Commissioners are hosting digital events with the public in order to hear about community concerns with coronavirus impacts, centered on a given topic. The following is a summary of questions raised during the April 16, 2020 Town Hall.

***Q: Considering that we are seeing success with grocery stores and banks being open, can we assume that other businesses will open back up soon? Also, are we just racing to get back to business as usual just to let things get out of control again?***

- Our biggest concern presently is how and when to open businesses back up safely. The stay-at-home order helped to flatten the curve and save lives. We continue to look to our health experts and are working on forming a COVID-19 Task Force to help us devise a plan to slowly and safely return to normalcy. Nancy Bush and the Disaster Management team are working hard to keep us all safe. We will be looking to the Governor's office for direction moving forward.

***Q: Is anything being done about the increase in traffic speeding?***

- The Sheriff's department continues to get reports of excessive speeding all around the county and is working to get patrol units to areas where excessive speeding has been reported. With 911 calls being up by 43% from this time last year, current demands on Sheriff's department personnel are exceeding capacity. To address questions, the Board is holding a Public Safety Listening session on Thursday, April 23.

***Q: From an Emergency Operations Center and Board of County Commissioners perspective, what are your greatest short-term needs, and what can be done to***

***create an effective recovery in the absence of increased testing capacity?***

- The challenge with testing is we simply do not have the supply. The county will continue to listen to our health professional and follow the Governor's recovery process guidelines.

***Q: How are we doing in response to PPE needs?***

- The county is ensuring that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) gets out quickly to providers who are serving at-risk populations. The EOC Liaison team is proactively reaching out to community-based organizations to inquire about their needs and also as a means to prepare for recovery.

***Q: Are further rent freezes being discussed?***

- We are not aware of any additional rent freeze guidelines at this time. Clackamas County continues to look to the Governor's order for guidance.

***Q: Will the County offer an additional extension to renters like they did in Multnomah County?***

- In the last long session, the legislation put into effect a state mandate with a ceiling on how much rent could be increased. Legislators did not end increases; they just applied a ceiling. The decision to extend rent criteria falls under the state's authority.

***Q: Will there be any funding available for undocumented residents who do not qualify for federal funds?***

- Business and Community Services is developing a program with Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon (MESO) to provide economic and social assistance to those affected by COVID-19. Ultimately, this program can help vulnerable businesses impacted by COVID-19 by providing much needed cash, as well as technical support to develop new talents and skills that make them more marketable.

***Q: Will there be a county fair this year?***

- As of April 16, the fair is still on. The Fair Board will be looking for direction from the state, county, and the Oregon Health Authority.

***Q: Will OSHA be inspecting manufacturing companies and issuing fines, and when can we expect to see OHA guidelines for businesses?***

- Yes, OSHA will be doing spot-checks. Businesses will need to be able to purchase PPE supplies such as disinfectant wipes and various forms of hand

sanitizers to induce state government to loosen restrictions. It is a challenge with the supply chain shortage of PPE. The Governor's office sent out an information document on April 13, 2020, which includes the following information: Ramping up its enforcement activity, Oregon OSHA will begin systematically conducting spot checks to verify that employers are complying with requirements – including closures to the public – aimed at curbing the coronavirus pandemic. The spot checks – which are in addition to more time-intensive, on-site inspections initiated by the division – are intended to confirm whether employers are actually doing what they are telling the division they are doing in response to complaints. <https://www.oregon.gov/newsroom/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?newsid=36363>

***Q: The North Clackamas School District is serving 1200 meals a day to families which is an added cost, mental health services will be a huge need and the district has concerns about the budget. They also have over 700 students who have a need for connectivity. What can the county do to help us meet these budgetary constraints?***

- County Technical Services personnel are working to get Wi-Fi hotspots set up and running quickly, which will help some students. The county is working to create up to eight Wi-Fi hotspots in the next few weeks, either at public buildings or at schools so a family could drive up and access the internet.

School districts are also eligible to apply for FEMA Public Assistance (PA) by completing a Request for Public Assistance (RPA) through FEMA's web-based platform Grants Portal. FEMA provides this assistance at a cost-sharing basis for emergency protective measures taken to respond to the COVID-19 emergency at the direction of guidance of state, local, tribal and territorial public health officials. The federal share of assistance is not less than 75% of eligible costs for emergency measures taken to respond to COVID-19. Clackamas County has attached a quick guide to help applicants navigate through the process of establishing an account and submission of the RPA. For questions regarding a Request for Public Assistance please contact Julie Slevin [julie.slevin@mil.state.or.us](mailto:julie.slevin@mil.state.or.us) at the Oregon Office of Emergency Management.

Regarding Behavioral Health, the county has been working at the schools and is currently working to structure an enhanced system of outreach and in-reach during this crisis. NAMI provides a tremendous service to the county for Behavioral Health services and is in the process of reformatting their current offerings and expects to be up-and-running sometimes during the week of April 20<sup>th</sup>. NAMI has online support groups available for anyone experiencing behavioral and mental health problems and their services can be accessed at their website: <https://namior.org/>

Also **211** has an incredible number of resources where people in need of services can download their free application on their cell phone.

***Q: I have more than a few friends that think they had COVID-19 before but were never hospitalized. How can they get an antibody test?***

- A reliable source of antibody testing is currently not available as over 70 companies are making the tests and the results vary widely. Because of this, in areas that have used antibody testing, it has created immense confusion. We will continue our efforts to gain access to further COVID-19 testing that is reliable.

***Q: Has Clackamas County received state or federal funding?***

- We have received state funding for public health and some from the CDC in January. We have needed to double Public Health staffing to stay ahead of the case investigation and contact tracing, and funding has been needed to ensure that staff has adequate PPE. We are expecting funding that is specifically for COVID. The state has received a significant amount of funds that we have not received yet. Without state and federal funding available at this time however, we are using county general funds dollars which will need to be reimbursed in order to continue county operations.

***Q: Does the county plan to open back up for business? Are county employees still getting paid if not in their offices?***

- The county is working to form a COVID-19 Task Force which will assist in determining when and how we open businesses, what kinds of businesses open, and the process and procedures for opening. We will follow the Governor's plan and also look to advice from our healthcare professionals.

Many county employees are working remotely and some are volunteering around the county.

***Q: Will the county be promoting supporting local businesses?***

- Yes, the county and the chambers of commerce will promote supporting local businesses through social media.

***Q: We continue to hear that there is a shortage of PPE and hospitals are overrun. How can that be if we only have 1500 cases statewide?***

- The shortage of PPE is not something that we can easily solve locally. PPE shortages is a global issue and remains a concern as the supply chain is stretched like never before. The county holds regular emergency exercises to plan for disaster events, including public health events and scarce resource scenarios. Our priority continues to be to provide PPE for our health care workers who are in direct contact with patients.

***Q: Clackamas County has 150 cases and three deaths and over 420,000 residents. Is it really necessary to shelter in place when so many people died from flu last year?***

- “Stay Home to Stay Healthy” and physical distancing have enabled us to save lives. We were the first county in Oregon to sign an emergency order. It is because we have been diligent that we have been able to keep the numbers of cases down. We cannot compare the flu to COVID-19. If we were to let COVID-19 run like we do the flu, the COVID-19 numbers would be much higher. Also, we do have vaccines for the flu but not for COVID-19. Science indicates that physical distancing continues to save lives. We will always err on the side of caution in order to save lives.

***Q: In light of coronavirus and high unemployment, will the County be making exceptions to property taxes payments?***

- Property taxes are the only form of revenue to support county operations. We will be discussing this further and may consider extending the payment period, however any plan to delay payments is governed by state law and would be a decision by the Governor. Counties cannot make this decision on their own.

***Q: How can we as citizens and Americans help in regards to supplying solutions to tracking communicable diseases? Are considerations given for software companies to help? Is there a need?***

- The county welcomes help and a software company may be able to use a 3D printer to create PPE. We have not seen a lot of donations. Food delivery to vulnerable populations would be a huge help.

***Q: Do we need testing centers in Clackamas County?***

- We would love to be put in situation to have PPE and test kits, however we do not currently have adequate resources to stand up mass testing centers.

***Q: How many additional staff will the County require when more testing is available?***

- In order to conduct contact tracing and disease investigation, we will need an estimated 500 additional public health workers across all of Oregon. We do not yet have a timeframe for testing and vaccine development. Over 125 local licensed health care workers have signed up to assist with mass testing and/or mass vaccines when it is time. In Clackamas County, we are currently fortunate to have seven-to-fourteen staff working seven days a week to help with contact tracing. We have consistently been able to perform contact tracing with every case and work to adjust staffing as needed.

***Q: How many respiratory therapy or first responders have died in Clackamas and Multnomah Counties?***

- None that we are aware of.

***Q: Do we know how much we will receive of the money earmarked from the state and what percentage will be specifically for small businesses through the recovery effort?***

- State funding will be earmarked and specific for the County general fund which has been spent down for expenses at the EOC, on PPE, and other essential functions. Our Economic Development staff will be working closely with the Emergency Operations Center and Health, Housing, and Human Services staff on how best to allocate funding earmarked for the long term recovery plan.

***Q: Does the County have an estimate of how many people were tested for COVID-19?***

- Daily updates are provided by the Oregon Health Authority. To view this data, and to sign up for daily updates, go to the Oregon Health Authority's website at <https://govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19>