

2020-03
OKALOOSA COUNTY DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY
PROTECTIVE MEASURES RELATED TO COVID-19
(March 24, 2020)

WHEREAS, Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a severe acute respiratory illness that can spread among humans through respiratory transmission and other potential methods, and presents symptoms similar to those of influenza; and

WHEREAS, in December 2019, a new and substantial outbreak of COVID-19 emerged in Wuhan, China, and has since spread rapidly to 150 countries and territories throughout the World, including the United States, and more specifically Okaloosa County and 26 other counties in the State of Florida; and

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, issued a Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease Outbreak pursuant to section 501 (b) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act; and

WHEREAS, as of March 18, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is reporting that the total confirmed cases in the United States has increased to 7,038 with a total death at 97; and

WHEREAS, with the advancement in testing of COVID-19 in the past week, the COVID-19 Whitehouse Task Force as well as the CDC is predicting that the amount of confirmed cases in the United States will increase rapidly in the next four to five days; and

WHEREAS, no vaccine or drug is currently available to cure or combat COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, Okaloosa County is threatened by COVID-19 because of the apparent ability of the virus to spread rapidly among humans, and COVID-19 thereby constitutes a clear and present threat to the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens and visitors of Okaloosa County; and

WHEREAS, the CDC has issued guidelines for “community mitigation strategies” to limit the spread of COVID-19, including recommendations for social distancing, which has proven to be an effective method for containing COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 9, 2020, Governor DeSantis issued Executive Order Number 20-52 regarding COVID-19, declaring a state of emergency in the State of Florida and authorizing in accordance with Section 252.38, Florida Statutes, each political subdivision within the State to “waive the procedures and formalities otherwise required of the political subdivision by law

pertaining to ... [the] [p]erformance of public work and taking whatever prudent action is necessary to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the community;” and

WHEREAS, on March 17, 2020, Governor DeSantis issued Executive Order Number 20-68 regarding COVID-19, closing Bars, Pubs and Nightclubs and limited gatherings of people on beaches and in restaurants; and

WHEREAS, on March 17, 2020, Governor DeSantis at a press conference discussing Executive Order Number 20-68 states that the Order was the “floor for Florida for the foreseeable future” and he encouraged communities to go further with regulations if needed; and

WHEREAS, on March 17, 2020, the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners declared a local state of emergency; and

WHEREAS, the Whitehouse Taskforce on COVID-19 cautioned on March 18, 2020, that younger people are not taking seriously the need to social distance as they do not fall into the highest risk groups for COVID-19 and as a result other countries are beginning to see an increase in the number of young people becoming seriously ill in the ICUs; and

WHEREAS, on March 19, 2020, the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners adopted a Declaration of Emergency Protective Measures, closing public beaches, beach accessways, certain beach parking areas, beachfront parks, limited the use of the pier, and suspended beach vending permits and Crab Island vending permits; and

WHEREAS, on March 20, 2020, Governor DeSantis issued Executive Order Number 20-69 regarding COVID-19, suspending any Florida Statutes that require a quorum to be present in person or require a local government body to meet at a specific public place and allowing local government bodies to utilize communications media technology; and

WHEREAS, on March 20, 2020, Governor DeSantis issued Executive Order Number 20-71 regarding COVID-19, suspending on-premise food consumption and on-premise sales of alcohol, and closing gymnasiums and fitness centers; and

WHEREAS, this emergency declaration allows the County to proceed with all mitigation, prevention, and awareness efforts to minimize impact from the COVID-19 outbreak, and to take measures to protect the health, safety and public welfare of our County residents, visitors, and employees; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 9, Article III, Section 9-42, Okaloosa County Code of Ordinances states that in a declared state of emergency the chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, absent a decision made by a vote of the quorum of the board, is empowered to declare a local state of emergency and take prudent action necessary to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the community.


NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of County Commissioners of Okaloosa County, Florida, does hereby declare and establish that, effective March 25, 2020 through April 30, 2020:

1. The County hereby closes all gulf front beaches within its jurisdictional limits.
 - a. Exception: individuals with a Commercial Saltwater Products License with a Restricted Species endorsement from the State of Florida for Pompano fishing.

2. The County strongly encourages:
 - a. Closure of all private community centers, meeting rooms and other places of gathering;
 - b. All pharmacies and grocery stores within the County to reserve a two-hour window, preferably upon opening, for those individuals over 60 years of age; and
 - c. The lodging industry to work with our visitors in offering refunds and rescheduling of trips.

PASSED AND DULY ADOPTED at a meeting of the Board of County Commissioners of Okaloosa County on the 24th day of March, 2020.

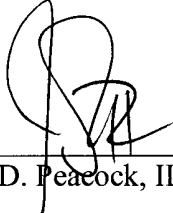
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: 
Robert A. "Trey" Goodwin III, Chairman



ATTEST:

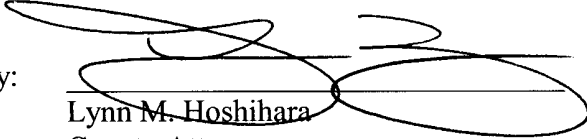
By:


J. D. Peacock, II, Clerk



APPROVED AS TO FORM:

By:


Lynn M. Hoshihara
County Attorney