

**THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2020**

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Board of Commissioners and meet in Emergency Session at 2:00PM in the Annex Meeting Room, Knox, Indiana, with Kathryn Norem, Bryan Cavender, and Charles Chesak present and the following proceedings were held to wit:

The meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called to order by Commissioner President Charles Chesak at 2:00PM.

**EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT HEAD AND PUBLIC MEETING**

Commissioner Norem advised that this meeting is mainly for the department heads as a brain storming session but because we are the government we need to post it as a public meeting and being the executive body they have to follow their procedures. She explained this is mostly a meeting for us to talk about our mitigation strategies here. We know the COVID-19 virus is coming, there is nothing we can do to stop that, so we need to talk about what we can do within the confines of our walls as well as what we need to do for the public to try to limit as much contact as possible. She would like to have Health Nurse Frank Lynch speak first about how you are exposed to it and what you would need to do if you are exposed to it. Health Nurse Lynch advised that the Starke County Health Department would like to ensure the residents of the county that we are working with our local organizations and doctors' offices that we are making sure that they have the most up to date information from the Indiana State Department of health and the Center for Disease Control on a daily and sometimes hourly basis. The Starke County Health Department does not have testing kits available. Testing is done through the CDC and the Indiana State Lab or through commercial labs like Lab Corp. Symptoms of COVID-19 are: fever, cough, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath. He explained in 80% of individuals who contract COVID-19 it only causes mild symptoms and some people don't even realize they have it. This is why it is spreading so easily. The elderly and those with preexisting medical conditions appear to be more vulnerable to the virus. There is currently no vaccine that will prevent COVID-19 and the best way to help stop the spread of any respiratory infection is to wash your hands for 20 seconds or more with soap and water, wash your hands often, clean and disinfect high touch areas throughout the day, avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, stay away from sick people, if you are sick stay home, and if you do feel the need to seek medical attention for your symptoms call first. Nurse Lynch stated the most important is the basic common sense things such as cleaning, disinfecting, and washing your hands.

Health Nurse Lynch also suggested putting tissues and trash cans somewhere where it is easily accessible for the public. Commissioner Norem advised that one of the packets that are available today for department heads is a packets labeled "Guidance for the workplace in preparing for COVID-19". She advised they are also talking about social distancing and guidance for this for the workplace. Attorney Lucas stated that this resource came from a human resources area and they suggest the following, avoid in person meetings and if possible use online conferencing, observe the social distancing, which is said to be about 3 feet. Health Nurse Lynch stated it should be about 6 feet away from each other according to the CDC. Attorney Lucas also stated that chairs should be moved 6 feet away from each other. He stated he has seen many entities begin doing this. He advised to avoid shaking hands and avoid any unnecessary contact. Travel should be postponed and any non-essential meetings should be rescheduled. Do not congregate in work rooms or break rooms. Bring your lunch to eat at your desk or away from others. Avoid lunch rooms, restaurants, and public transportation. Limit all recreational or leisure meetings. He advised that if there are public in your office then departments should try and keep them 6 feet apart. Several discussions were held regarding supplies and specific instances each department may need and encounter as well as reimbursement procedures for those supplies.

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Charlie Chesak, President

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Kathryn Norem, Vice-President

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Bryan Cavender

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Rachel Oesterreich, County Auditor  
& Secretary to the Board of County Commissioners