

**MANATEE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
EMERGENCY MEETING  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER  
1112 Manatee Avenue West  
Bradenton, Florida  
MARCH 16, 2020**

Meeting video link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUlgjuGhS-qV966RU2Z7AtA>

Present were:

Betsy Benac, Chairman  
Carol Whitmore, First Vice-Chairman  
Misty Servia, Second Vice-Chairman  
Reggie Bellamy, Third Vice-Chairman  
Vanessa Baugh  
Stephen R. Jonsson  
Priscilla Whisenant Trace

Also present were:

Cheri Coryea, County Administrator  
Mitchell O. Palmer, County Attorney  
Vicki Tessmer, Board Records Supervisor, Clerk of the Circuit Court

Chairman Benac called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

**AGENDA**

BC20200316DOC001

**1. COVID-19 STATE OF EMERGENCY**

 Jacob Saur, Public Safety Director, thanked his team and used a slide presentation to provide an overview of COVID-19, including the history of the virus, Florida and Manatee County statistics, Florida updates provided at noon each day, a global map of the outbreak, local actions to date, several cases in Florida related to ports and airports, Florida being a tourism hub, additional private sector labs are coming online which will raise the rate of positive cases, goals for using community mitigation strategies, Emergency Operations Center Level 2 Activation, and implementing community mitigation standards. He emphasized this is a time is a time plan and prepare, not panic.

 Dr. Jennifer Bencie, Manatee Health Department Director, stressed that citizens should practice preventive care, and stay home if an individual is feeling ill. At this time, Manatee County has five positive cases of COVID-19. She encouraged citizens to call the Manatee Health Line, 941-242-6649 prior to visiting an emergency room or health care provider. The Florida Department of Health has a 24-hour hotline, 866-779-6121. The Manatee County Department of Health is working closely with other government entities, and remains committed to the residents of Manatee County.

Discussion ensued regarding thanking staff for communication, Public Safety's role is to assist the Department of Health, possibly having the local health line open 24 hours a day, and inform citizens, when they call the hotline and have been screened, that they do not meet the criteria for COVID-19 testing.

Dr. Bencie stated the local hotline is open 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., after those hours, citizens should call the State hotline. She will ensure the public is notified of the State hotline. The criteria regarding screening for COVID-19 changes daily, and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) always applies to anything medical. Personal information is not given regarding infected patients.

Discussion continued regarding if there is a number for residents to call if they need supplies, Commissioner Servia has a team to help residents, and is it possible to specify the area in the County where positive cases have been identified.

 Dr. Bencie explained the virus is transmitted via respiratory droplets within six feet. Many people may be infected, but are unaware due to the intensity of symptoms. Everyone should take the same basic precautions and treat this as a public health issue.

 Mr. Saur noted it is important for the public to understand that even if they are not feeling sick, to be conscience of their actions, practice social distancing, and be aware of how to handle oneself throughout the day. At this time there are no plans for a drive-thru testing site in Manatee County. Broward County will be the first to get these sites and the information regarding results will be provided by the State. The Emergency Operations Center is open, and there is a possibility of press conferences when needed. Residents should text Manateeready to 888-777 to receive updates from Manatee County.

 Discussion ensued regarding Meals on Wheels needs volunteers, declaring a State of Emergency will open up the availability of federal funding, County purchases will be tracked for reimbursements, and there are currently no plans to close beaches and businesses.

 Cheri Coryea, County Administrator, clarified the County will cooperate with the Island municipalities regarding any closures.

 Mr. Saur stated direction to close businesses would come from the State.

 Dr. Bencie reviewed the order of events for testing. The first step is call the Health Department, who in turns contacts the emergency room and EMS for transport. Providers can also decide if a patient should be tested in a private lab. Emergency rooms have the specimen collection kits, which are being taken to the lab in Tampa. Private labs are able to get results quicker than the hospitals. The number of specimen collection kits is limited and there is no specific vaccine or treatment.

 Mr. Saur clarified Code Red is for emergency notifications. Manateeready is the best way for residents to receive information regarding COVID-19. The Governor will make recommendations regarding any regulations.

 Discussion ensued regarding the election, and cleaning pens between each voter.

 Dr. Bencie explained a pandemic is an illness taking place on at least two continents, and COVID-19 is a mutated virus with no identifiable treatment. The level of health care in a country determines the number of deaths. COVID-19 will continue to spread if precautions are not taken such as travel bans.

 Dr. Edwin Hernandez clarified social distancing is based the distance that a particle of saliva can travel in the air to infect another person. New cases of influenza have decreased, because citizens have begun to practice safety measures to help prevent spreading germs.

 Dr. Bencie stated the Center for Disease Control current guidelines are to avoid group activities of 50 or more people. Masks are for persons who are sick, to prevent spreading germs to uninfected individuals. If you are well, you do not need a mask.

A motion was made by Commissioner Servia and seconded by Commissioner Jonsson to adopt Resolution R-20-041 declaring a State of Local Emergency related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

There being no public comment, Chairman Benac closed public comment.

The motion carried 7-0.

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**ADJOURN**

There being no further business, Chairman Benac adjourned the meeting at 2:20 p.m.

Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_