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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 17, 2020

MARIANNA, FL -- During a special meeting of the Board of County Commissioners this morning, the primary topic of discussion was COVID-19. Sandy Martin, Administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Jackson County, stated that as of 11 a.m. there were a total of 192 positive tests in the state of Florida. There are no cases of COVID-19 in Jackson County at this time. Ms. Martin further explained that the necessary use of preventative measures is to slow down the transmission of the virus, which is largely transmitted person-to-person, although disinfecting surfaces in your home or work space is highly recommended to prevent the spread of germs. When asked for a guideline on elevated body temperature, which is a symptom of the virus, Martin stated that 100.4 is considered a heightened temperature. If an individual is diagnosed with COVID-19, the recommended self-quarantine period is fourteen days. The Florida Department of Health has a call center dedicated to answering questions and concerns about the virus. The number to reach the national call center is 1-866-779-6121. The Department of Health in Jackson County also set up a call center and the local number is 850-526-2412.

Also briefing the Board today were Fire Rescue Chief Charlie Brunner and Corrections Chief Jammie Jeter. Both updated the Board on the preventative measures instituted in their respective departments. Chief Brunner stated that callers dialing 911 may expect some additional questions from the dispatcher; primarily, the questions will be if the caller is exhibiting any symptoms associated COVID-19, have they traveled internationally recently, and have they been in contact with a laboratory-confirmed person who tested positive for the virus. Chief Jeter confirmed that in-person visitation at the jail has been suspended temporarily. Other means of visitation are in place, primarily video visitation. The jail population is currently approximately 230 persons.

County Administrator Wilanne Daniels addressed the Board on a number of items related to the operations of the county during this crisis and sought direction on proceeding with some preventative measures which will reduce exposure and observe the current Centers for Disease Control guidelines and recommendations. The County owns several facilities which are rental venues and those facilities will cancel all events for the next thirty days. Individuals who have booked rental facilities such as Citizens Lodge, the Extension Office on Penn Ave., the AG Center on Hwy. 90, and the Russ House will be contacted immediately and made aware of this decision. If an individual or group paid a deposit for the rental and would like to reschedule their event for a date after April 17, 2020, the deposit will be held for the new date. If they wish to cancel altogether, they will be refunded any deposit that has already been paid.

The Board also decided to cancel the regular board meeting scheduled for Tuesday, March 24, 2020. The next regular meeting will be April 14, 2020 at 9 a.m. The reason for this decision and the cancellation of events at county-owned venues is to adhere to the CDC recommendations that group gatherings be limited and groups of fifty or more people not congregate in one place.

Beginning Wednesday, March 18, 2020 County offices will be closed to public access. This closure will be in effect until March 30 and will be re-evaluated at that time. All offices will have information posted on the doors to their building, instructing the public on the options available to contact staff and conduct business electronically, over the phone or by appointment, depending on the issue. It is the desire of the Board and county administration to provide services as seamlessly as possible while still doing what is necessary to protect citizens and abide by the recommendations of state and federal officials. Please call the department you wish to conduct business with, prior to visiting, so that county staff may direct you on how best to proceed. County department contact numbers can be obtained by calling 850-482-9633 and selecting option 5. Information will also be posted to the county Facebook page.

The Board approved a Local State of Emergency, presented by Jackson County Emergency Manager Rodney Andreasen. The LSE will assist with expedited administrative needs. The Emergency Operations Center is not currently activated, but is maintaining a status of heightened situational awareness and will activate upon confirmation of a positive test, confirmed by the CDC.

County officials and staff will continue to keep the public informed on any changes to operations or procedures.

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