



**Region 5 – COVID-19 – County Response**  
**Meeting Notes**  
**Benton – Franklin – Klickitat – Skamania - Yakima Counties**

**Wednesday, April 29, 2020**  
11:00 am – 12:30 pm

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**FACILITATORS:** Jaime Bodden, WSALPHO and Mellani McAleenan, WSAC

**ELECTED COUNTY OFFICIALS & STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:**

**Benton**

Brenda Chilton, Auditor, Jerome Delvin, Commissioner

**Klickitat**

Ruby Irving, Solid Waste Director

**Skamania**

Bob Hamlin, Commissioner, Tom Lannen, Commissioner, Richard Mahar, Commissioner

**Yakima**

Vicki Baker, Commissioner, Ilene Thomson, Treasurer, Craig Warner, Financial Services Director

**Legislators:**

Rep. Matt Boehnke, Rep. Gerry Pollet, Sen. Christine Rolfes, Rep. Joe Schmick

**Legislative Staff:**

Elizabeth Allison, James Crandall, Brandon Popovac, Kellen Wright

**LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE**

Jason Zaccaria – Administrator, Benton-Franklin Health District

Rick Dawson – Senior Manager, Benton-Franklin Health District

- In early January, they began watching/monitoring returning travelers
- The month of February, activated emergency response and shared vital information with the medical community
- Developed information for health care providers, as well as the public
- Cases began showing up in March
- Worked on funding for isolation/quarantine for the emergency response team

**CHALLENGES AND LOOKING AHEAD**

- With the easing of restrictions, what protective actions will be available for local citizens?
- Serious concerns with the farm workers and their current housing.
- Active monitoring of Tyson plant with regular reporting taking place. This affects the county agricultural businesses, as farm workers normally live in multiple jurisdictions.

### CHALLENGES AND LOOKING AHEAD cont.

- 1000 individuals have already been tested, anticipate surge in cases.
- What is the long-term impact on the community?
- FPHS needs additional funding – work force is stretched – will need additional staff members to combat COVID 19.

### IMPACT ON COUNTY FUNCTIONS

#### Benton

- Employees are all on administrative leave except essential employees.
- The courts are working on a limited work schedule.
- Correctional facility – there is a hold on contract prisoners to reduce population – a strict protocol has been put in place.
- Sales tax revenues will be much lower than had been budgeted.
- Quarantine hotels have been set up.
- The local food bank is currently using the fairgrounds to help community members.

#### Klickitat

- Solid waste department is still closed to the public.
- Transfer hours will have been adjusted – some employees have been laid off.

#### Skamania

- **Good News...** The district courts are operating and currently processing several court fines.
- Anticipating budget shortfalls – Skamania Lodge has been closed – significant loss of sales tax revenues.
- They have seen an increased demand at the local food bank.
- How does the county open to the public, as well as visitors? What adjustments will need to be made?

#### Yakima

- Trying to be proactive with the agricultural community.
- Additional testing is being done, working hard to control the curve.
- Monitoring day to day operations – the courthouse employees are working 30% from home.
- Local businesses are very concerned. What are they supposed to do? Would like a safe pathway to reopen.
- Will need to coordinate with the local health district to monitor those that are isolated/quarantined.
- Food supply shortage is a big concern.
- Will need to provide PPE's for non-profits.
- Yakima Valley Nonprofit Needs – informs the community on what local nonprofits currently needs exist and provides valuable information such as drop-off locations and the status of operations.
- The courts are semi-opened – domestic violence and child custody cases are currently on the agendas.
- Foresee significant court backlog.
- Would like some flexibility on siloed money, as it is dedicated to very specific services.

## **ANTICIPATED NEEDS MOVING FORWARD**

### **Benton**

- Serious concerns with anticipated loss of businesses and revenue.
- The community is very frustrated and feeling defiant- would like to reopen parts of the community.

### **Klickitat**

- Would like to see what can be done with small businesses?
- Would like direction on what steps will be required to the “new way” of doing business.
- Long term impact will be felt down the road, as there will be a significant loss of revenues.
- Serious concerns for a second possible shutdown.

### **Skamania**

- Defiance being felt throughout the communities.
- What is “essential business” versus “non-essential business”?
- Extra funding is needed to move into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, current system is very antiquated.
- Loss of gas tax revenue – possible 50% lower.

### **Yakima**

- Budget concerns due to lack of revenues.
- Trying hard to stay ahead of the food supply situation.
- What is the pathway to reopen businesses? How many small businesses will close their doors?
- How do we help the community with rental assistance?
- Will need additional staffing for contact investigation.
- PPE will be an ongoing issue, as well as test kits. Priority will be given to hospitals, health care providers, as well as those performing the tests.
- Private industry will also need PPE's – this need has yet to be addressed.