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

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

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:

Legislative Staff:
Elizabeth Allison, James Crandall, Brandon Popovac, Kellen Wright

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE

Jason Zacccaria – 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 20th 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.