Region 6 – COVID-19 – County Response
Meeting Notes
Adams – Chelan – Douglas – Grant – Okanogan Counties

Wednesday, April 29, 2020
8:30 am – 10:00 am

FACILITATORS: Jaime Bodden, WSALPHO and Mellani McAleenan, WSAC

ELECTED COUNTY OFFICIALS & STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:
Adams
Vicki Guse, Administrator; Karen Potts, Community Health Director; Terry Thompson, Commissioner

Chelan
Bob Bugert, Commissioner; Doug England, Commissioner; Cathy Mulhall, Administrator

Douglas
Jenny Fasching, Executive Assistant; Dan Sutton, Commissioner

Grant
Cindy Carter, Commissioner

Okanogan
Chris Branch, Commissioner

Legislators:

Legislative Staff:
Jeff Olsen, Saundra Richartz, Kellen Wright,

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE
Theresa Adkinson, Administrator – Grant County Health District

- Appreciates the support her office has received from the elected officials
- Grateful for the loaned 20 laptops from the WSC Extension
- Began monitoring returning travelers; first case was in March
- The health office worked hard on getting out the message to the community and to help them understand what COVID-19 was
- Worked through the emergency management system helped in showing a unified approach, staff worked out of the Sheriff’s Office
- County government and public health came together to face this new pandemic
- Everyone was learning about the virus and learning how to respond to the virus
- Currently seeing COVID fatigue throughout the community
CHALLENGES AND LOOKING AHEAD

- Hope there will be fewer cases and fewer people getting tested.
- What will the exposure risk be?
- How do we open businesses in a safe and responsible manner?

IMPACT ON COUNTY FUNCTIONS

Adams:
- Commissioners have heard the concerns from the public to reopen their businesses.
- Adams County has a small number of cases.
- Would like to reopen the courthouse, but will wait another 2 weeks, possible date – May 18th.
- Would like to request very specific guidelines on how to reopen businesses in a safe way.

Chelan:
- The current population in jail is felons.
- Building permits are down.

Douglas:
- Foreseeing loss of revenue in sales and gas revenues.
- Building permits are down.
- Trying to project the budget – possibly a loss of $800,000.
- Hiring/spending freeze will possibly be enforced.
- 10% cut in department.
- Future elections – social distancing will need to be enforced, as the community usually desires to vote in person.

Grant:
- Serious concerns with the small businesses – will there be funding for the self-employed?
- When will they be allowed to reopen?

Okanogan:
- Loss of income – very serious budget concerns.
- Small business community is getting restless – new campaign “Open Okanogan” – which businesses express their desire to open with “soft opening” plans.
- Case numbers are slowly increasing in the county – shortage of testing supplies.
- Would like to work with the Governor’s office and ask for some local control regarding opening the community.
ANTICIPATED NEEDS MOVING FORWARD

Adams:
- Farmers are struggling – have an overabundance of product – no one is buying;
  2 local plants will see significant cuts – possible layoffs, as there is no market to buy their products.
- Small businesses are feeling the financial crunch.
- Will feel the loss of sales tax.

Chelan:
- Moving forward – unsure of what the loss of tax dollars will be.
- Will possibly use their reserves but looking forward to 2021 & 2022 is very worrisome.
- The fruit industry has been hit hard – staggering numbers with a fear a work force shortage.
- With no labor force to pick the fruit, it affects the whole community – packing warehouses will be closed, which will have a significant consequence for the county.

Douglas:
- Local hospitals have been severely affected – laying off staff, as there are no elective surgeries.
- 10% in possible cuts – loss of $2 million dollars.
- Layoff of county staff will impact the ability to provide services to the public.

Grant:
- Local hospitals will be laying off staff, with budget implications.
- Agriculture industry has been severely impacted – companies are giving away food since there are no buyers.

Okanogan:
- What will the impact be on the county with delayed tax payments?
- It’s possible to extend the dates for property taxes.
- Fruit industry – serious concerns about an adequate work force.
- The county is prepared to open some departments but will continue to watch the case numbers.