

COMMISSIONERS PROCEEDINGS
MAY 1, 2020

Agenda: 10:30 AM RE-OPENING STEVENS COUNTY WITH COVID-19

The Board of County Commissioners met in special session with Commissioners Tron Stegman and Pat Hall present. Also present were; Amy Jo Tharp, County Clerk; via zoom.com - Joe Thompson, County Commissioner; Paul Kitzke, County Attorney; and RoGlenda Coulter, Hugoton Hermes. Tron called the meeting to order.

This session was public by way of www.zoom.com conference to comply with state regulations. There were several people in attendance on the line: Kelsee Burnett, Alisha Owens, Vernon Anderson, Paula Rowden, Tony Martin, Thea Schnittker, Vanessa Willis, Stacey Strickland, Eunice Schroeder, Gary Gold, Susan Schulte, Lori Rome, Linda Stalcup, Amy Rich and several other individuals.

Paula said Phase One (1) of the governor's plan is still very restrictive with travel and interactions. She said Governor Kelly is following the Federal guidelines of the Trump Administration with a few exceptions. Counties can be more restrictive but not more lenient. At this time, gyms and cosmetology/barbers are still closed to the public for this phase. She cannot open them due to the governor's restrictions.

Paula said clothing stores and restaurants can be open. The restaurants have limitations of no more than ten (10) people or less and the diners need to be six (6) feet apart.

Eunice Schroeder of the Stevens County Library said during this phase the Library will stay closed for the safety and security of the workers and community at large. She said the staff will be working on sanitizing all materials that have been returned to the library. There will be no checking out at this point. She plans on Phase Two (2), with no increase in COVID-19, having curbside service by appointment only and will sanitize those materials being returned. Phase Three (3), she will allow limited access to the library and only the number of people mandated by the health department and state will be allowed. Computers will only be available for business during that phase.

Tron Stegman answered a question about the Pioneer Manor, if it is still closed to the public which falls in the governor's guidelines. Yes, it is closed to the public for this phase.

Paula told the commissioners the state received additional testing kits from the government to test 60,000 people in clustered areas including Southwest Kansas where the numbers are high. She said there is a drive-up testing site in Seward County. She is in communication with them to get the Stevens County numbers as they come up to have an accurate count.

The courthouse was discussed as far as opening to the public. Paul Kitzke said to phase open like it was phased closed. He said to monitor people coming in and suggests appointments only. The criminal dockets on Mondays have around fifteen (15) or more people at times and with dockets being pushed back about six (6) weeks there will be more dockets and people coming in.

Thea Schnittker, with the Register of Deeds office, said they wear face masks anytime a customer comes in and sanitize everything when the person leaves. The customers only come in with an appointment and are told to bring their own mask, pen and paper.

Kelsee Burnett, District Court Clerk, said the restrictions are not being taken seriously by the public. She said they will only allow people in the courts with appointments and will follow mandated guidelines.

Rodney will procure gloves and masks for the offices. Amy Jo said she located some portable plexi-glass shields (sneeze guards) for the desks for the offices that would like to use them, along with several gallons of sanitizer.

Joe Thompson made a motion to limit the courthouse to appointment only, temperature checks and each department will be responsible for limiting two (2) customers per office. Customers are required to wear masks and employees will wear masks when the customers come in. Pat seconded. Motion carried.

Paula stated questions about symptoms, temperature checks and if a person has been out of state should be asked of the customer as they enter the building.

Thea suggested contact information should be left by the customer so they can be contacted if there is an issue. Paul said we can't force a customer to leave contact information but we can ask if they would like to leave a phone number.

Paula said quarantines are mandatory stay-at-home and self-regulating if a person has symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19. Health Care workers can work as long as they are screened regularly and will be sent home if they have symptoms. There is an ID support agency which delivers to the individuals under mandatory quarantine as they should not be out in the public.

Vanessa said the Treasurer's office will remain closed to the public until they are no longer required to wear masks. She cannot handle items across her face and does not feel her employees should be required to wear a mask if she isn't. Vanessa said if they had the plexi-screens, she would be able to open. But then the issue of paper and money being passed between employee and customer without being properly sanitized would pose the same problems.

Joe said a department head has the right to not open to the public if they feel it is in their best interest.

Vanessa said the drop box that was installed was not what she wanted but it will work until this restriction for COVID-19 is over. She can also do curbside service for those who need to drop something off for their office or conduct business.

Pat Hall asked about relaxing late fees on property taxes and Joe said the commissioners would have to abate for something that can be paid over the phone or by mail.

Linda Stalcup with the Stevens County Hospital and Pioneer Manor said there will be no visitors allowed at Pioneer Manor until June 1st and not before. She informed the commissioners that Boyett and Lynette told her there were no ventilators at the hospital but can accept patients to some extent. The rest would need to be transported to a hospital with proper equipment. Linda said the testing is going well, working with Paula has been helpful as well. She is pleased with the staff and how they are conducting business.

Lupe Acosta stated he is a business owner of the Acosta Restaurant in town and said Southwest Kansas is a hot spot now. He has been doing curbside but has halted the delivery service due to the safety of his employees. Business has been slow. He asked Paula to explain the number of people allowed in the restaurants if he has staff and several different rooms that can be used. Paula said some restaurants have a back door so diners can come and go that way without going through the whole restaurant and have the option of paying at the table. Paula said she feels the workers would not be part of the ten (10) person rule and if there were multiple rooms which could hold ten (10) people at the six (6) foot distance, it should be possible but check with Paul.

Paul said the mandate in place for Phase One (1) states no more than ten (10) people per table and six (6) feet apart and he suggests the customers pay at the table instead of hanging around the entrances. Lupe appreciated getting an explanation on how restaurants are to conduct business. Jan Leonard said the Bonnie and Clyde restaurant has two (2) entrances and can comply comfortably with the mandates for Phase One (1).

Paula said Phase Two (2) is proposed to take effect May 18th which would open swimming pools, libraries, gyms and community centers. She did state it would depend on the increase in incidents for our area. She will review before going to the next phase for our area.

Tony Martin said Road and Bridge has the most employees within the Stevens County departments and will continue to stay safe by using precautions and distancing. He expressed his thanks to the health department and hospital staff for their work.

By motion, the Board adjourned.

Attest: Amy Jo Tharp, County Clerk

Tron Stegman, Chairman