

## Adams County Commissioner Update – May 8, 2020

- We are pleased to report that Juvenile and Criminal Court proceedings, which began on Monday at the Courthouse and Human Services Building, have reportedly gone very well. Security, social distancing, cleaning procedures, audio/video technology and PPE have all been put into play to meet CDC and DOH mandated safety practices. The resumption of hearings has enabled the Court to reduce the Court backlog and preserve individual rights. A loud shout out to the County & Court Team that merged professionalism and planning talents to facilitate this seamless transition.
- The resumption of Court proceedings on May 4 marks the gradual re-opening of Adams County government. On Monday, May 11, county row offices that support Court functions will re-open fully staffed. These Row Offices include the Prothonotary, Clerk of Courts and Register & Recorder. On Monday, May 18, the Elections Office in the Courthouse, and Domestic Relations at the Human Services Building, will resume public operations. Elections Office business will be conducted at the walk-up window in the lobby. On May 26, all District Magisterial offices will return to normal operations. The Board of Commissioners has strived to ensure that all County departments have maintained operations since the Emergency Declaration in mid-March. The Board has been monitoring and evaluating the guidance issued by the CDC and DOH on COVID-19 workplace safety protocol. As that guidance and advice from the Governor's office continues to evolve, the Board will be determining a timeline and operational protocols for the general re-opening of county government in a safe and prudent manner.

It should be noted that "re-opening" for Adams County Government will look different than before COVID. Both staff and the public will be required to wear masks and have their temperature scanned. Only a pre-determined number of clients will be allowed in an office at one time, with the rest spaced out at marked intervals in a holding pattern in the hallway. Some offices will have secure drop boxes to reduce foot traffic into these offices. Enhanced cleaning and sterilization practices will continue in county and court offices, and the use of video and teleconferencing will continue to be utilized when practical. A Work-From-Home policy will be developed and instituted when practical. The foregoing are examples of best practices and commonsense applications that will allow us to get back to business in a safe manner and adjust to the new practices.

- Most Pennsylvania counties do not have their own Department of Health. Like many other counties, Adams County officials have become frustrated not being able to get the locations of COVID cases within our county. With all due respect and regard to privacy issues, we deem municipality and "hotspot" locations critical for our Medical Community, our Department of Emergency Services and our First Responders. We need to know where hotspots are located, whether it be a nursing home or industrial processing or fabrication operation. Adams County DES officials have expressed this critical concern to PEMA. A bill to address this issue was reported by the Senate Appropriations Committee on April 28 and approved by a 47-3 vote of the Senate on April 29. The bill would direct the Secretary of Health, or local health authority, to release data related to confirmed COVID-19 cases to county 911 centers and other first responders during a Proclamation of Disaster Emergency. Counties have been requesting this information to assist responders and help to efficiently allocate personal protective equipment (PPE) resources; but current state privacy laws have complicated the ability of state agencies to share the data. The bill has been referred to the House Health Committee.

- With the COVID pandemic sucking up much of the oxygen around us, we cannot forget that we have a postponed Presidential Primary Election just around the corner on June 2. The recent passage of Act 12, 2020, postponed the Pennsylvania primary election to June 2, 2020, and amended the Election Code with other emergency provisions for the primary election, including poll worker provisions, flexibility on consolidation of polling places, ballot printing and canvassing ballots.

The Primary Election will look significantly different on June 2 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased demands for mail-in ballots, caused poll workers to be less willing to serve, and made polling places more challenging to find. At the same time, this is also the first election with Act 77, 2019 election reforms, including the use of mail-in ballots. The demand for mail-in ballots has surged well beyond initial estimates, largely due to COVID, and have created significant challenges with the volume of mail-in applications. In Adams County we have put additional resources and staff into the effort to meet this challenge. We are pleased to report that through the efforts of many professional and dedicated county staff, many that are pitching in from other departments, the challenge is being met. Voters going to the polls will probably see shorter lines because of mail-in ballots, proper distancing and plexiglass shields between voting booths. Also, note that the Brethren Home poll has moved to the Irishtown Fire Hall, and the Lutheran Home poll has moved to the Adams County Department of Emergency Services Building beside the prison.

- A sure sign of late Spring is that Farm Markets are opening all over Adams County with an array of fresh produce. The Gettysburg Farmers Market, at Gettysburg Station, behind the transit center, will be open tomorrow. Also, don't let the so-called meat shortage make you pause. We fortunately have local butcher shops in every corner of Adams County. Just try one of them, and you may hesitate to go back to the big chain store again? Help support our local agricultural community so they can support us.
- Have a Happy Mother's Day weekend however you choose to honor and celebrate our Mom's. Get out there and explore all the opportunities that beautiful Adams County has to offer!

Randy L. Phiel  
Adams County Commissioner, Chairman  
111-117 Baltimore Street  
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania 17325  
Phone: 717-337-9820  
Fax: 717-334-2091  
[rphiel@adamscounty.us](mailto:rphiel@adamscounty.us)