

Adams County Commissioner Updates – June 12, 2020

- Today Adams County enters the *Green Phase* of the pandemic transition plan. You can now walk into a restaurant for dine-in service. What a pleasure it was having breakfast at the Texas Lunch this morning. The Green Phase eases most restrictions by lifting the stay-at-home and business closure orders to allow the economy to strategically reopen while continuing to prioritize public health. Below is summary of the State's *Green Phase* requirements:

Work and Congregate Settings Restrictions

- ✓ Continued Telework Strongly Encouraged
- ✓ Businesses with In-Person Operations Must Follow Updated Business and Building Safety Requirements
- ✓ All Businesses Operating at 50% Occupancy in the Yellow Phase May Increase to 75% Occupancy
- ✓ Child Care May Open Complying with Guidance
- ✓ Congregate Care Restrictions in Place
- ✓ Prison and Hospital Restrictions Determined by Individual Facilities
- ✓ Schools subject to CDC and Commonwealth Guidance

Social Restrictions

- ✓ Large Gatherings of More Than 250 Prohibited
 - ✓ Masks Are Required When Entering a Business
 - ✓ Restaurants and Bars Open at 50% Occupancy
 - ✓ Personal Care Services (including hair salons and barbershops) Open at 50% Occupancy and by Appointment Only
 - ✓ Indoor Recreation, Health and Wellness Facilities, and Personal Care Services (such as gyms and spas) Open at 50% Occupancy with Appointments Strongly Encouraged
 - ✓ All Entertainment (such as casinos, theaters, and shopping malls) Open at 50% Occupancy
 - ✓ Construction Activity May Return to Full Capacity with Continued Work Safety Protocols
- We have been fielding questions regarding CARES Funding for Adams County small businesses and municipalities. Six Pennsylvania counties with populations in excess of 500,000 received direct CARES Block Grant funding from the federal government. Adams County and the 59 other counties are now eligible to apply to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) for federal CARES Block Grant dollars to be awarded by the state proportional to our population. The State

notified Adams County on June 11th, 2020 that the County may now apply through the State system for funds. The State requires that County applications for Block Grant funds be completed by June 16th, 2020 and adhere to DCED guidelines. After the Adams County application has been submitted and we receive direction from the State regarding a possible award, the County will publish through the Adams County website, local media and newsletters, to all eligible businesses and municipal entities, the application for funds and the funding award criteria. Questions should be directed to the Adams County Planning office @ 717-337-9824.

- **The Pennsylvania General Assembly recently passed legislation authorizing No Excuse Mail-in Voting, which was utilized for the first time in the June 2 Primary Election. There are varying opinions on the dynamics of mail-in voting, but unless or until the General Assembly changes the legislation permitting No Excuse Mail-In Voting, this is the system that the County is charged with administering. The large number of mail-in ballots that was anticipated was unexpectedly multiplied by the COVID pandemic. Approximately 50% of the total votes cast in Adams County for the Primary Election were cast by mail-in voting. Opening the outside envelope, removing the ballot envelope, removing the tri-folded ballot, unfolding the ballot, and smoothing it out for the scanner is much, much, slower than the scanner's capability. The result is a significant burden on election staff to prepare the ballots for processing by the scanner in order to obtain election results in an expeditious manner. In Adams County that was 2PM Wednesday, and in some counties, ballots were still being opened and processed this week! This situation will be greatly exacerbated in November. Dan Moul and I recently discussed this issue and the real security concerns surrounding it. Given that mail-in legislation in Pennsylvania is probably not going to go away for November, we have come up with at least one option for consideration by the legislature that will allow counties to begin canvas prior to Election Day. We propose the following protocol:**
 - ✓ **Designate certain days for the pre-canvas limited to opening and preparing the ballots for the scanner.**
 - ✓ **The preparation canvas will be done by the same staff that would be charged with performing the same task for days after the election.**
 - ✓ **There would be an appropriate Republican & Democratic Poll Watcher in the room monitoring the process – as is now done in the after-election canvass.**
 - ✓ **The process would be video-taped, as we did this year when opening the envelopes on Tuesday & Wednesday.**
 - ✓ **The uncounted prepared ballots would then be stored in an approved secure area, like occurs currently with the unopened envelopes; but they would be under the supervision of the Director of Elections and another designated person such as the President Judge or Chief Clerk.**

There is no doubt that counties across the Commonwealth were staggered by the amount of time it took to accomplish the ballot preparation process to insert into the scanner described above. Short of eliminating all mail-in voting, which is within the sole

discretion of the General Assembly, counties need to be able to prepare mail-in ballots for the scanner on election day in a safe and secure manner. Hopefully, this would be a concept that enables it to be done more efficiently and securely.

- This weekend promises to be an especially beautiful weekend in Adams County. Restaurants, produce stands, farmers markets, theaters and small retail businesses are now open for your pleasure with some limitations. Get out there and enjoy beautiful Adams County while supporting your local businesses, friends and neighbors as they return to serving you.

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