

Cook County Declares State of Emergency

March 17, 2020– The Cook County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution declaring a State of Emergency during the regular scheduled meeting on March 17, 2020. The resolution states:

COOK COUNTY RESOLUTION #20-14 RESOLUTION DECLARING A STATE OF EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, COVID-19 is a viral respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus that has not been found in people before;

WHEREAS, COVID-19 is an illness which is potentially fatal to older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease;

WHEREAS, coronavirus is known to spread rapidly among populations without preventative measures and rapid action by local authorities;

WHEREAS, Cook County has a higher than average population of older adults, a higher than average level of movement across its borders related to Cook County's tourism industry and its seasonal population;

WHEREAS, preventing the rapid spread of coronavirus and related fatalities among the Cook County population and its visitors requires swift action by the Cook County Board of Commissioners, its staff, and Cook County public officials,

WHEREAS, Cook County has already been required to purchase, and will continue to purchase necessary equipment, software, and other technological resources to allow for teleworking and the provision of essential services to its citizens and visitors without increasing the risk of transmission of the coronavirus;

WHEREAS, Cook County anticipates being required to expend additional financial resources to prevent the spread of coronavirus and make related communications; and for providing essential services to individuals in quarantine and isolation as a result of exposure to coronavirus or testing positive for the virus or COVID-19 illness;

WHEREAS, THE Cook County Department of Emergency Management requests the Cook County Board of Commissioners to declare Cook County in a STATE OF EMERGENCY during the COVID-19 outbreak in Cook County of March, 2020.

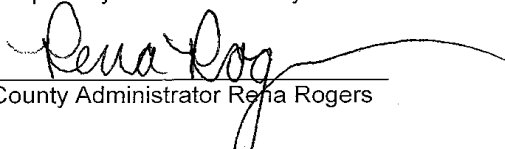
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners declares Cook County in a STATE OF EMERGENCY for conditions resulting from the the COVID-19 outbreak in Cook County of March, 2020.

Adopted by the Cook County Board of Commissioners this 17th day of March, 2020.

MOTION: Doo-Kirk. SECOND: Deschampe. All ayes. Commissioner Mills absent.

ATTEST:

I, Rena Rogers, County Administrator (Interim), hereby attest that the foregoing resolution was duly adopted by the Cook County Board of Commissioners on the 17th day of March, 2020.



County Administrator Rena Rogers

Cook County to Restrict Public Access to County Buildings

March 24, 2020– The Cook County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution restricting public access to county buildings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The resolution states:

COOK COUNTY RESOLUTION #2020-20

RESTRICTING PUBLIC ACCESS TO COUNTY BUILDINGS DURING THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK OF 2020

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the Governor of the State of Minnesota declared a peacetime emergency related to the transmission of the novel coronavirus and its resulting illness, COVID-19; and on March 17, 2020, the Cook County Board of Commissioners declared Cook County in a STATE OF EMERGENCY for conditions resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak;

WHEREAS, COVID-19 is a viral respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus, potentially fatal and known to spread rapidly among populations without preventative measures and rapid action by local authorities;

WHEREAS, Cook County has limited local medical services, a higher than average population of older adults, and a higher than average level of movement across its borders related to Cook County’s tourism industry and its seasonal population;

WHEREAS, public health authorities have recommended that action be taken to reduce likelihood of novel coronavirus transmission in public places and in order to slow down “community transmission” of the virus;

WHEREAS, the Cook County Board of Commissioners has a responsibility to manage operations within its facilities in a way that best protects Cook County employees from becoming ill and best prevents or slows the transmission of the novel coronavirus;

WHEREAS, the Cook County Administrator has requested that members of the public be restricted from entering Cook County facilities and alternative means for providing essential county services be determined and deployed by county staff; and

WHEREAS, Sixth District Court Judge Michael Cuzzo and Sixth District Court Chief Judge Sally Tarnowski have been consulted and restricting public access may be accomplished consistent with the recently issued orders of the Sixth District Court and the Minnesota Supreme Court related to continuity of court operations under the COVID-19 outbreak.

THEREFORE, be it resolved that

1. All Cook County business at least at the level of essential operations shall continue;
2. The County Administrator is directed to work with county department heads to develop and institute procedures and policies for the provision of essential county services without the requirement of entry into county buildings; primarily by phone, email, and other means, without unnecessary face-to-face contact between members of the public and county employees;
3. These procedures shall not be inconsistent with the Orders issued by the Supreme Court of the State of Minnesota on March 13, 2020, and March 20, 2020; and the Orders issued by the Chief Judge of the

Sixth Judicial District on March 18, 2020, and March 20, 2020, all concerning continuing operations of the courts and access of the public to the courts;

4. These procedures shall not be inconsistent with Open Meeting Law (providing access of the public to public meetings of public bodies), Government Data Practices Law, the Americans with Disabilities Act, or any other state or federal law;
5. The County Administrator is directed to publicize and disseminate the modified procedures the public shall use for accessing county services as soon as possible;
6. The Cook County Sheriff is requested to assist in enhanced screening procedures as required by the Judicial Branch and intended to reduce the likelihood of coronavirus transmission; and
7. **Effective as of noon, Wednesday, March 25, 2020, all county buildings are closed to physical public access until further notice except as allowed by the County's modified procedures for access to county services referred to above.**

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Contact: Rena Rogers, Interim County Administrator at Rena.Rogers@co.cook.mn.us

Cook County Issues Travel Advisory

March 25, 2020– The Cook County Board of Commissioners issued a travel advisory Tuesday, March 24, 2020, in response to concerns surrounding the spread of COVID-19.

Due to the unpredictable nature of the of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board of Commissioners determined it prudent to issue a travel advisory for persons planning to visit Cook County and persons planning to return to their summer cabins or second homes in Cook County. The following guidelines have been provided and will remain in effect until further notice:

1. Due to high community transmission in certain areas of the state and across the nation, Cook County is recommending that visitors stay in their home area, including people who have a seasonal or second home in Cook County, due to the county's limited healthcare infrastructure.
2. People who have seasonal homes in Cook County, please stay at your primary residence at this time. If you are already in Cook County, you should immediately self-quarantine for 14-days. If you have questions, please call the county's COVID-19 line at (218) 387-3668.
3. Cook County has one of the highest populations of older adults in the state of Minnesota. This population is among those at the highest risk of COVID-19; it is our priority to keep our older residents healthy and safe.
4. On March 17, 2020, the Cook County Board of Commissioners declared a countywide COVID-19 State of Emergency. Please be aware that additional health and travel restrictions may be imposed during this time.
5. This is an everchanging and very serious health situation, and Cook County needs to be diligent in its response.

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Contact: Rena Rogers, 218-387-3687 or rena.rogers@co.cook.mn.us

A Filing Extension and New Rules for Service of Tax Petitions in Cook County Under COVID-19

March 30, 2020— On Saturday, March 28, Governor Walz signed legislation extending the time for filing property tax petitions for contesting 2019 value or classification to May 30, 2020.

In another move to aid in following social distancing rules recommended by public health experts, Cook County will waive personal service of property tax petitions contesting 2019 value or classification so long as property owners meet certain conditions.

Cook County will accept service of Tax Court petitions by email (preferred) or mail. Emailed petitions shall be directed to: county.attorney@co.cook.mn.us. Mailed petitions shall be sent to:

Cook County Auditor
411 W 2nd Street
Grand Marais, MN 55604

Petitions must include an admissions of service page (already included as page 2 of Minnesota Tax Court Form 7). County staff in the Attorney's or Auditor's Office will acknowledge service by signing this page. After all signatures have been applied, the county will email the petition and proof of service to the petitioner. The county will work to return petitions with the completed proof of service the same day they are received. If no email is provided, the petition and proof of service will be returned by mail.

It is the responsibility of the petitioner to timely file the petition with proof of service with the district court. Updates on the status of the district court can be found on the Minnesota Judicial Branch website (<http://www.mncourts.gov/>). More information about the filing process may be found on the Minnesota Tax Court website (www.mn.gov/tax-court).

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Contact: Bob Thompson, Cook County Assessor, bob.thompson@co.cook.mn.us