

COVID-19 Update Press Conference

Wednesday, May 20, 2020

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Ed Kelley - Chair, Volusia County Council

Holly Smith – Communications Manager, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Good afternoon. I'm Kevin Captain, interim Director of Community Information for Volusia County Government. We have a very brief update for you today.

Today you'll hear from Volusia County Council Chair, Ed Kelley, and, Holly Smith, the Communications Manager with the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County.

Yesterday the Volusia County Council met and discussed many issues, including issues surrounding COVID-19. And without any further ado, I would like to introduce Volusia County Chair, Ed Kelley.

Ed Kelley - Chair, Volusia County Council

Thank you, Kevin. And, today we have some really good things for you to hear and one of the most important ones is that we really had a meeting yesterday. For those of you who want to take the time and look at it, it's on-line. You can pull it up and look at it. But, in yesterday's meeting you can actually see for sure there is absolutely no way that we could be accused of violating the Sunshine Law because everything that we had to discuss was out there. And, most of us hadn't discussed it with a point of view before that. So, that was one of the things.

Let me discuss, and it was a good meeting; we did arrive at a lot of good things for you. Here are some of the highlights. As you know, it's been stated previously before, that through the CARES Act, the County is receiving \$96.5 million dollars in funding to go to help people recover from the COVID-19. But we want to ensure that we are making the best use of these funds. We don't want to waste them, we want to apply them to where there is a need, and the best places where we can use them is to help you

and small businesses to be able to get back and being productive, so that you will make yourself productive and make the community productive. And we want to ensure that we are taking care of the needs that you have, in addition to that, what are some other ways that we can do that?

Many of you are suffering from no income. You are having difficulty finding funds for your mortgage or for your rent. Two of the programs we have in helping your rent, and your mortgage, which was approved yesterday, that information can be found at Volusia.org, and just search for mortgage or rent information. I am trying not to give you all of the forward, dot, dash information; just go to Volusia.org and enter what you want to search for and that information will be there.

On the business grant program that we expanded yesterday, we originally had a \$3,000 grant for anyone with 1 – 25 employees. That was a one-time \$3,000 grant. Yesterday we expanded the coverage to allow any business with 26 – 50 employees, with \$5,000 in losses, to justify those losses, submit the application and we will get you the funds as quickly as possible. Now, I understand that by yesterday we had already received over 1,800 applications. And, when the applications are approved, they come in, it is a simple process to be approved. If you are in a city as opposed to an unincorporated area, in a city it goes to the city so that they are aware of your business tax receipt is in effect and that you also have your business tax receipt for Volusia County. It then goes, and within four to five days from approval, the funds will be dispersed.

Another thing that is important -- eating. It is amazing to me, it's terrible actually, but it is amazing to me that we have the funds. I think about trying to compare this to the Great Depression through the 29's through 34, 35, people didn't have food. This time we are being able to apply, what we have set aside, \$3 million for food to help people, and to make this "Feed A Family" grant program.

And, regarding the business assistance yesterday, when a program rolled out the businesses with a 25, as I mentioned, and now if you have a business with 26 to 50, go to Volusia.org, and it is very simple, you can find out the eligibility.

Something else that we did yesterday, we established a program, not complete, but we will establish a program of \$2.5 million to assist the non-profits. Non-profits are vital in our community, not only do they help in our community, but the volunteers who serve in those provide a useful benefit for all of us to make those communities what they are today. The details of that will be worked out and ironed out on the meeting of May the 26th, at 10:00 a.m. We are working diligently to make sure that we can have the dollars go to make the best impact that they can.

Here's something else that has happened; vacation rentals. Yesterday we had a discussion on how to do that. What we did, and I was there last night when that went and was submitted to the State for their approval. We do expect that approval to be quickly received because there were some counties that submitted applications on Friday, and they were approved by Tuesday morning. We are hopeful that ours will be approved by Thursday. And, we can have that as soon as it is approved we will make that announcement. You do not have to do anything else, and we will make an announcement, as well as it will be on-line. So, continue to check on-line, as soon as we receive approval from the State, and we will get that electronically. As soon as that is done, you'll know that you can go ahead and start your rental of your vacation. A lot of you depend upon that for income. A lot of the condos in the area, especially the shores and others, they were built and partially designed for those that are here part-time. We have those plans done.

And, beach, my favorite subject. This week, every, single beach ramp that we have will be open, and we are expanding those. Now, we are also expecting huge crowds this weekend. Please abide by the parking. And, the simple thing is that you park directly in front of a post. Either a blue marker or a turtle indicator zone. Park in front of one of those, enjoy it, do the social distancing, no more than six or less in a group and ten feet apart from other groups. Enjoy the weekend. We also know that sometimes the beach ramps are closed depending upon the tide and if all the parking posts are filled, the ramps will be closed. But, somewhere here I have a list, and I have it right here. And one other thing that I am asking is that this is updated on the Volusia beach app; go to that and all of this information will be there.

Ramps that are not heavily used are shown, and you will not remember them, but they will be listed on-line, and they will be on the Beach app. Millsap Road, Harvard Drive in Ormond. Williams Avenue, and Williams Avenue, and Williams has also been expanded to where it is not only for those with handicapped stickers. Botefuhr Avenue, Minerva Road, Florida Shores Boulevard, Van Avenue, El Portal Street, and a full list of those ramps is available at Volusia.org/beachdriving.

We will have high morning tides, so some of those ramps may be closed or the delay in opening may be until the tides start to subside. And, if you don't want to worry about tides, use one of our free off-beach parking lots.

Speaking of surf, there is a potential for rip currents. Follow the safety guidelines and one thing that we always get every day from the reports from the Beach Patrol; swim and play in the ocean in front of a

lifeguard. Don't take unnecessary risks, and if you do get caught in a run out, swim parallel to the shore; don't try to swim against it. If you get into a situation where you need help, let someone around you know and don't try and swim back to the beach; swim parallel to the beach.

Finally, one thing that you may have already forgotten is turtle season began May 1st, which means that all of the vehicles will have to be off of the beach by 7:00 p.m. It is something that you don't realize, but sand castles, holes, beach equipment, like chairs and tents, create a major hazard for nesting turtles. Not so much for those coming in to lay the eggs, but for those little turtles, up to 100 per nest, when they try to get back out. So, if you could, before you leave, if you built a sand castle or dug a hole, try and take a little bit of time and kick the sand back in or spread the sand again to make it where it would be possible for them to escape, or when they are nesting or hatching.

There is sure to be more in the coming days and weeks. For the latest updates always hit Volusia.org/coronavirus. And, now it is my pleasure to introduce, Holly Smith, from the Department of Health in Volusia County.

Holly Smith – Communications Manager, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County

Thank you Mr. Kelley. Good afternoon, Holly Smith, Florida Department of Health here in Volusia County. As of this morning, the Florida Department of Health is reporting 618 people who have tested positive for COVID-19 here in Volusia County. 33 of those people have died from Corona virus. That's an additional 3 deaths since yesterday. These statistics are updated daily at F-L HealthCOvid19.GOV. That's F-L HealthCOvid19.GOV .

This week the Department of Health here in Volusia County offered free COVID-19 testing at a pop-up site in Ormond Beach. That site closed about an hour ago. Over the three-day testing event, nearly 700 people drove through that Ormond Beach site to be tested for COVID-19.

Tomorrow the Florida Department of Health will open new a pop-up testing site. This one will be in DeLand. Testing will be outside Spring Hill Park, that's on Thursday, Friday and Saturday of this week – weather permitting. That's three days starting tomorrow. It will be open from 9 in the morning until 1 in the afternoon or while supplies last. Anyone... can get tested at this site. This is the nasal swab type test. You do not have to have symptoms to be tested. You do not have to even live in the city of DeLand.

This site will have drive-thru testing and walk up testing. If you are driving through for testing, take West Beresford Avenue to South Thompson Avenue. The drive thru test site will be next to the Spring Hill Park. Walk-up testing will be inside Spring Hill Park.

The DeLand testing site is a partnership between the City of DeLand, Volusia County Government, the Florida Department of Health, here in Volusia County, and the West Volusia NAACP. If you want to get through that testing line faster, all you need to do is pre-register. Pre-registration is not required. It only will help you to get through the line faster. To pre-register, please call the Department of Health at 386-274-0500 and then press # for coronavirus information. That's 386-274-0500 and select # for coronavirus information. That registration call center is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week.

If you get tested it will take about week to 10 days to receive results. The Department of Health will call you with the results of the test.... Whether they are positive or negative, the Department of Health will call you.

Again, if you would like to pre-register for testing at either of these sites, please call the Department of Health in Volusia County. The telephone number is 386-274-0500 and press # for the COVID call center. Thank you, Kevin?

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Thanks, Ms. Smith, thank you Mr. Kelley. With that, we will not have a briefing tomorrow afternoon as we normally have been in past weeks. And, it will be determinate on whether we will have one Friday afternoon; just watch the Volusia Emergency Management Facebook page.

And, as we close I just want to give a special recognition and acknowledgement to our Emergency Medical Service providers. This week is national EMS Week and this is a particular time, now more than ever, where we need to recognize all of those at the front line who are rendering health care in this pandemic. With that, we will close this briefing. Take care, and stay safe.