

# PRESS CONFERENCE

MARCH 13, 2020

## **Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia**

Good evening. Kevin Captain, Interim Director for Community Information for Volusia County Government. Thank you for joining us tonight and together. We know that right now there are many questions and concerns. As you can see from the diverse group gathered with us tonight, the Volusia County community is working closely with its local partners, as well as their state and federal authorities. As with all other local governments, we closely are monitoring the information provided to us by the Florida Department of Health. As we receive updates, they'll be posted on [Volusia.org/coronavirus](https://www.volusia.org/coronavirus). Before I invite the first speaker up, I'd like to ask that you hold your questions until the end of the conference and we'll take questions at that time.

With that, I'll introduce Volusia County Chair Ed Kelley.

## **Ed Kelley, Volusia County Chair**

Thank you Kevin. And I guess you know we've become accustomed to being here for hurricanes. This is totally new to all of us. This is the first time that I think any of us have had to go through this. Kevin had mentioned that. And please understand we are working very diligently at this time to make sure that you're provided all of the information as quickly as it's made available.

As you know, yesterday, Governor DeSantis declared a State of Emergency for the State of Florida. Earlier today, President Trump issued a Federal State of Emergency. In alignment with these declarations, we felt that it was important and appropriate that the county also issue a State of Emergency. We're working closely with the Florida Department of Health who is the lead agency for all testing of infectious diseases. The county's doing everything we can by cooperating with the local partners, government agencies and we need your help. We need your help so that individuals will follow the recommendations set forth by the Department of Health. Wash your hands thoroughly and often. Avoid large gatherings. If you do not feel well, stay home and call your primary care physician first.

Our website [Volusia.org/coronavirus](https://www.volusia.org/coronavirus) has all of the latest information and it's updated as soon as the information becomes available from us whether it's a state or federal announcement. While we're doing all we can, please assist us by doing all that you can.

And with that, I'll turn it over to County Manager George Recktenwald.

## **George Recktenwald, County Manager, County of Volusia**

Thank you Mr. Chair. Good Evening. As Kevin stated, we continue to work closely with all of our partners to ensure the safety and welfare of both our residents and our visitors. The Center for Disease Control has issued recommendations to the public to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, including canceling large gatherings exceeding 250 people. We are encouraged to see that the CDC's recommendations are being followed by many of our event holders. Following this recommendation, as well as the Governor's advice, the county highly recommends that the public avoid these mass gatherings.

As a county, we've taken precautionary measures both internally and externally. Sanitation measures have been drastically increased all across the county at all of our facilities and parks. We are prepared to adjust county operations to protect our employees and continue to serve the community. The Daytona Beach International Airport and Votran have increased their cleaning and are taking additional measures to remind the traveling public of preventive actions to reduce the spread of germs. We're working closely with our customers of the Ocean Center on bookings in the near future. And with the Declaration of the State of Emergency by the Federal Government, State and County, we're actively reviewing all of our county controlled activities to act in the best interest of our citizens and guests. As Kevin also mentioned, our public information network website has been activated. We can be found at Volusia.org. This is the best place to find updated information from the county. City and agency information is also posted there as it's received.

With that, I'd like to bring up Emergency Management Director Jim Judge who'll speak more to the Local Declaration of Emergency and the preparations.

## **Jim Judge, Emergency Management Director, County of Volusia**

Thank you sir. Good evening everyone. As Kevin stated, we now have a local State of Emergency and that follows suit with the Presidential Declaration, the Governor's Declaration, so then now it's our turn to put that Local State of Emergency in place. This gives us additional operating flexibility. We suspend the normal purchasing practices that we go through on a daily basis. It just makes it easier to get goods and be able to stay on top of our supplies. If emergency needs arise we're able to appropriate again those funds as necessary.

Beginning today, the Emergency Operations Center will be going to a partial activation. We'll continue ramping up that activation through the weekend and through next week. Questions regarding the COVID-19 should be directed to the Florida Department of Health's call center. I know you all have that, but 866-779-6121.

And with that, now I'd like to invite Dr. Scott Fritz to come up with the, our Superintendent of Schools.

## **Dr. Scott Fritz, Superintendent of Volusia County Schools**

Good evening. Today at four o'clock, the Commissioner of Education and Governor DeSantis got all of the superintendents on a conference call and enacted an Executive Order extending spring break by one week. The purpose of that time is to have our students not have crowded, be in crowded settings, to be away from their schools. They have canceled extra-curricular activities for the next two weeks including athletic events. We do have a Pandemic Academic plan should we have to go beyond that time that we could enforce so that we can have our students continue their education. We are still waiting on guidance from the state regarding things such as makeup days and graduations. But at this time, that's where we're at. We expect that to change over the next few days. As we get more accurate information, as it keeps being updated, we will certainly alert the public.

And now, Derrick Henry

## **Derrick Henry, Mayor, City of Daytona Beach**

Good afternoon. In congruence with the Federal Government, the State Government, and now our County, we have made the following decisions as it relates to the City of Daytona Beach. Effectively immediately, the city is suspending issuance of new permits. All individuals of private companies with events of 100 or more attendees are strongly encouraged to postpone or cancel such events. The city is suspending all city sponsored senior citizen programs and activities. We're canceling or postponing all private and public community events at city parks and city owned facilities with 100 or more expected participants. This includes events in venues such as Peabody Auditorium, Municipal Stadium, Bandshell, Jackie Robinson Ballpark and city's community centers and recreational facilities. Effective at 8:00am Saturday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, the city is revoking all permits for outdoor events and activities related to Bike Week. Known cancellations and postponements include City Commission Meeting scheduled for March 18<sup>th</sup>.

In addition, I would like to comment or remark that we welcome to our city almost 10 million visitors each year. That is an astronomic number and these decisions have been made with great thought and deliberation. But, at the end of the day it is about the safety of our residents and the safety of our visitors. So we want to also encourage young people who are preparing spring break, who have an extended spring break, to make alternative plans as it relates to this particular season. Preferably that they would choose another destination. Preferably the destination of their homes. So in other words, we're asking that you not do as you have done in the past. You've always been welcomed. We will have Bike Weeks again and certainly we will continue to have spring breaks in the future. But at this time we're asking that you make a different choice and choose another destination.

At this time I would like to introduce Patricia Boswell with the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County.

## **Patricia Boswell, Director, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County**

Good evening. I'm Patricia Boswell. I'm the administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County. At this time, at the news conference, we have three cases of coronavirus in Volusia County. All of these cases are associated with the Nile River tour. The cases include a 66 year old female, a 60 year old female and a 70 year old female. I do want to clarify the last case was a female. It was previously reported as a male. Currently, there is no evidence of community spread of coronavirus in Volusia County. I want to explain what that term means, community spread. It means that people have been infected with the virus in our area including some who are not sure of how or where they became infected. That last part is key. We have been able to associate all three of the Volusia cases with international travel. Our epidemiology investigations told us where the cases were exposed to the virus, which was internationally and not here in the community. Let me assure you that I completely understand the interest everyone has in having more information regarding these cases. However, the Florida Department of Health has to balance patient privacy with the responsibility to Floridians to disclose the information to protect the public. And so at this point I cannot provide any additional information regarding these cases. We do have a web page and a phone number. The web page [FloridaHealth.gov\Covid19](https://www.floridahealth.gov/Covid19) and a 24/7 call center 1-866-779-6121. Individuals may also email [Covid-19@floridahealth.gov](mailto:Covid-19@floridahealth.gov).

Thank you. And at this time I'd like to introduce our Sheriff Chitwood.

## **Sheriff Michael Chitwood, Volusia County Sheriff's Office**

Good afternoon. On behalf of all first responders for Volusia County, I want to take the opportunity to tell people this is not a time to panic. This isn't a time to really panic and lose common sense. This is a disease that we're asking you to use common sense and inform yourself. If there's an emergency, by all means call 911. If you're not sure, call 911. Volusia County Sheriff's Office is doing everything it can to protect our employees and all first responders from the spread of the coronavirus.

Starting Monday, what we're going to do in the county is if you have a non-emergency police report, an example would be somebody broke into my shed and there's no witness, there's no other physical evidence to be recovered, we're going to ask you to either come to a precinct to report it or we're going to ask you to report it online. The objective again is to limit the contact the first responders have to only emergency calls. The non-emergency line that everybody needs to keep in mind is 386-248-1777, 386-248-1777 for non-emergencies. If you're in doubt, call 911.

If you call with a medical emergency, be prepared to get a series of questions asked to you by the call taker. Some of those questions will include: have you left the United States within the past 14 days, have you been in contact with somebody who has left the United States within the last 14 days. It's important that we get as much information in the hands of first responders so that they can protect themselves and provide you with the level of care that you need. Remember, our job as first responders is to be there when nobody else is. It's our job to look out for them. To make sure that they're protected and that they can continue to serve. Because if we get sick, we

can't get there to help you. So again I want to stress that if it's an emergency call 911. In non-emergencies we're going to ask you to fill out a form online or we're going to ask you to come down to a precinct where there'll be plenty of on staff folks to take reports.

We only expect this to go for the next couple of weeks. So we ask you to be patient, and we ask you to be smart, we ask you to follow the guidelines that are being put out by the Florida Department of Health, the Volusia County Department of Health and by the CDC.

### **Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia**

Thank you Sheriff. Thank you to all our speakers. And we care about the health and welfare of our public. And that is the county's number 1 priority. As you can see we're all taking this very seriously and working together in a coordinated effort to keep our community protected. And while we're doing all we can, we're also relying on the public. It does come down to one's individual responsibility. We need your help just as much as you need ours. Wash your hands as often as you can. For updated information we repeat that you can go to [Volusia.org/coronavirus](https://Volusia.org/coronavirus). You can also visit the Florida Department of Health's website and [CDC.gov](https://CDC.gov).

With that, we'll open this up to questions to the individual officials and we'll start now.

#### **Question # 1**

The President today, as you well know, declared a National Emergency giving 50 million in dollars to states and territories to fight this coronavirus. What do you need here in Volusia County if you had to, you know, come up with a purchase list of things whether it's PPE vs. protection gear, equipment, or whatever? What do you need in Volusia County?

#### **Response by Jim Judge, Emergency Management**

Great question. What do we need here in Volusia County as far as products that the funding wouldn't be made available? Right now we are enhancing our public protection equipment, we have actually put some requests into our WebEOC, which is the software that Volusia County, all 67 counties, and the Florida Division of Emergency Management use. So, we put some requests in for additional PPE just to make sure we've got plenty on hand. Even as much as hand sanitizer because that certainly has been a commodity that's not in great supply at this moment. So, just a few items that we've put in for. We've got a great supply, the Health Department has a good supply as well. But, you know it's always good to be prepared because should the new situation come around we're going to use a lot of that. So, you know, better be prepared and have that product, you know, have it on standby.

#### **Question # 2**

Do your hospitals and medical providers in Volusia County have testing kits and how many?

### **Response by Patricia Boswell, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County**

So, Governor DeSantis had a press conference this afternoon at two o'clock and during the conference he indicated that he has 2,500 testing kits that can serve 625,000 individuals to be tested, which he indicated in his comments that was more than any state had requested. So right now, the hospitals and the private doctor's offices are indicating that they don't have the kits readily available to them so we're working at the state level to ensure that we get more test kits into both hospitals and private providers so that more testing can be done at commercial labs. Now, the difference here that you need to understand is that the collection of the specimens are not being done at our commercial labs. So if you're going into a physician's office, you need to ensure if the testing is something that needs to happen, they have the capability to do that testing.

### **Question # 3**

So, at this time there are a lot of people swarming to stores under the impression that stores are going to be shut down. You mentioned that you guys are trying to keep mass gatherings down, so, I mean, with so many people flooding stores, it's not good.

### **Response by Patricia Boswell, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County**

The recommendation is for people feeling ill to stay home and self-isolate while they're experiencing any illness. We have increased cases of flu right now. We see other respiratory diseases happening in our community. People are feeling the effects of different illnesses in addition to this particular virus that we're dealing with. So, stay home if you're not feeling well. Certainly, at this point we're not, there's no indication that people cannot go to public places. It's the mass gathering that's being discussed tonight. Thank you.

### **Question # 4**

Timing with Bike Week. Is that because you just declared an emergency or is this something that could have been done three or four days ago. In other words, over the last three or four days we've had tens of thousands of people gathering down on Main Street and other venues in the county. I guess, should that have been done sooner?

### **Response by Derrick Henry, Mayor, City of Daytona Beach**

Well, now that's a fair question, but it was done in congruence with what the Governor stated as it relates to the county. So at this particular time we felt that it was time for us to act as the Governor suggested and he suggested that we suspend or curb as many mass gatherings as possible. And certainly that is a mass gathering and as you know, once Bike Week goes into action, it's in action. And the only thing we're doing is curbing the portion of it that we control as a municipality. Which are, as you know, the licensing permits.

### **Question # 5**

But, should it have been done sooner in retrospect?

### **Response by Derrick Henry, Mayor, City of Daytona Beach**

Well, in retrospect I will allow you to make that judgement. As far as I'm concerned, I've made the decision in the city as it relates to the information that we've been given. But, you know, the journalists and the community will have to make that decision.

### **Question # 6**

(Couldn't understand the speaker. The question was not repeated)

### **Response by Derrick Henry, Mayor, City of Daytona Beach**

It will impact the permits that we've given as it relates specifically to itinerary vending and so those are pretty much obsolete at 8:00am.

### **Question # 7**

(Couldn't understand the speaker. The question was not repeated)

### **Response by Derrick Henry, Mayor, City of Daytona Beach**

Yes. On private property. Those things that we don't have control over, yes.

### **Question # 8**

Anything else on city property that are impacted?

### **Response by Derrick Henry, Mayor, City of Daytona Beach**

Well it impacts, as I said, the Peabody Auditorium and the events that we have there. Anything that we harbor. Yes, it would impact these things also.

### **Question # 9**

Beyond the itinerary vendors (Couldn't understand the speaker and the question wasn't repeated)

### **Response by Derrick Henry, Mayor, City of Daytona Beach**

Absolutely. I would encourage, and we have, and that's part of the broader statement from the city that we are encouraging businesses to discourage folks, but you know those are things that businesses, decisions they will have to make.

### **Question # 10**

With schools being out, parental help. (Question was paraphrased by Kevin Captain)

### **Response by Dr. Scott Fritz, Superintendent of Volusia County Schools**

That question was actually asked on the conference call today so we're waiting for some of that information. But again, going back, the idea is to not have a whole lot of people together. This is a community event. I think everybody's going to suffer, including working parents, with this.

### **Question # 11**

On the question of isolation, recently the secretary for the Agency for Healthcare Administration said when it comes to nursing homes and skilled nursing facilities it's really going to be important to get the help from the gentleman and ladies from the EOC. If those facilities, God forbid, but if those people need to be isolated, some skilled facilities can do it, others can't. Do you have the resources? Do you have the beds ready, willing to go if they need to move to another spot and that nursing facility cannot handle those senior citizens?

"So, to repeat the question, it's about skilled nursing facilities and the preparations, capability and capacity" (Kevin Captain paraphrased the question)

### **Response by Patricia Boswell, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County**

So at this point during today's press conference, Governor DeSantis did indicate that in Broward County they were prohibiting all visitors to assisted living facilities and nursing homes and other skilled facilities. That's an example of what happened in Broward because of the number of cases that they have down there. So I would say that in our county, what we've done to date, and we've been working very closely with ACCA, on our efforts locally. Contacting every facility, making sure that they have what they need in terms of hand sanitizer, all the things to keep the facility clean, make sure they have adequate staffing that they're not dealing with any staffing shortages, and making sure they have a plan in place as what to do in the event. It's called a COOP (Continuity Of Operations Plan) and going over that with them, and then giving them our contact information so that if they do see something happening within their facility to contact us immediately. And right now there is a sign on the doors of nursing homes and assisted living facilities requiring that all visitors sign in and they're checking their temperature.

### **Question # 12**

In the event that there was a patient in a nursing home or assisted living facility that required isolation, would there be another facility for that person to be housed in? (Patricia Boswell paraphrased the question)

### **Response by Patricia Boswell, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County**

So we have a plan in place with Emergency Management to use another facility in the county if there was a need for separate beds for people that needed to be self-isolated.

### **Response by Jim Judge, Emergency Management Director, County of Volusia**



Patricia let me help with that. Also at the Division of Emergency Management, we review all of their plans every year. Every facility has a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, it has to have fuel, they have to have certain supplies on hand, they have to have transportation resources if they're going out of county, they also have to have sister facilities that they work with. So, those comprehensive plans have worked very well through hurricanes. We're certainly going to see how they work through this episode. But we're there to support them. So, with Emergency Management, with Emergency Medical Services, our hospitals and our Department of Health, we're there to back them up to do what needs to be done should we come into that situation with a patient that needs to be isolated. A lot of resources, a lot of support, a lot of communication, so you know, we're ready to deal with it if we face that problem.

**Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia**

We'll take a couple more questions.

**Question # 13**

I know you said they're working on a solution for childcare. Do you have a timeline? Are you guys having another conference call tomorrow? And will that conference call be available to the public?

"Timeline for child care while school is out" (Kevin Captain paraphrased the question)

**Response by Dr. Scott Fritz, Superintendent of Volusia County Schools**

The calls that I'm on are actually a superintendent conference call so you have to be a superintendent to be a part of that conference call. But, we have been working with our PIO to get that information out very quickly and she sits on those calls with me. The question is whether or not there will be childcare at the school sites. There will probably not be childcare. We've had extended day programs, but we have to look at the numbers. It depends on how many folks we actually have showing up. If we're over that recommended number it would just be like a regular school day. This virus doesn't know the difference between an extended day program or an academic day. So we have to be, we have to make sure that we're following the best recommendations going forward on that. We are sensitive that parents are going to be inconvenienced. But, again, this is a community problem. And so, if you work in a facility that has 1,000 people, those types of industry and organizations are facing the same struggles that we are.

**Question # 14**

My question is for the Mayor. Really suffered the impact (Couldn't understand the speaker and the question wasn't repeated)

**Response by Derrick Henry, Mayor, City of Daytona Beach**

Has lost or will loss, but, in either case, it's way too early for us to make any determination of that nature. And quite honestly it's sort of above my pay grade. I really don't get into the economic weeds and weigh in until after the fact when economists give us those answers.

#### **Question # 15**

Why could we not disclose more information when the first two cases were disclosed, specifically about where in the county they reside? (Paraphrased by Patricia Boswell)

#### **Response by Patricia Boswell, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County**

I would like to correct, I'm not Dr. Boswell. It's Patricia Boswell. So I want to make sure that's corrected. Thank you. Thank you for that. And I want to repeat the question. Why could we not disclose more information when the first two cases were disclosed, specifically about where in the county they reside. And, so again, we're part of the Florida Integrated Department of Health, public health system. And we are basically practicing this across the state. Our Surgeon General, who's our health officer, has shared with us the guidance that talks about how to protect. It's a balance. And maybe it's easier if we talk about HIV. Something that we're all very familiar with and we have lived with for Decades. We don't disclose who is infected with HIV. The same thing, I've never been asked where a TB patient lives.

#### **Question # 16**

Some general information was provided regarding HIV. There seems to be a different set of rules for people that have been identified as contracting coronavirus.

#### **Response by Patricia Boswell, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County**

Well, I think it's not a different set of rules. In that HIV, it's data and it's about rates and number of cases. This is about an epidemiology investigation. So when you're doing an investigation, you need to protect the individuals involved in that. So for example, when we were doing first tests, that test went to a state lab in Jacksonville and it was considered a presumptive test result. Then from there it goes to CDC for confirmation so we need to be very careful about information and then protect individual's information. So in terms of the residence, that is not information that the Department of Health in Florida is sharing in any of our counties. Now, in terms of the travel related, we'll provide that, the gender and the age.

#### **Question # 17**

Following up on what he said. What about our protection? Don't we need to know?

#### **Response by Patricia Boswell, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County**

Patricia paraphrased the question: The public safety component of this and why doesn't the public know for their own safety?

Individuals are self-isolating. They're staying at home for fourteen days. We are checking on them and monitoring them and making sure that they have what they need to stay at home. That is the measures that are taken at this point. Everyone's been 100 percent cooperative in terms of the way they are self-isolating.

**Question # 18**

The test kits. You said they would serve 625,000 people. Is that statewide or Volusia?

**Response by Patricia Boswell, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County**

Statewide, according to the Governor's press conference today.

**Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia**

Any other questions? Okay. With that we will close this conference. We thank you for joining with us tonight. And again, we're concerned about the health and welfare of all our citizens and visitors. And please continue to follow the guidelines of the Florida Department of Health and the CDC. Good evening.