



April 23, 2020

Good Afternoon.

We continue with Governor's Cooper Executive Order #135 (Stay at Home) now extended to May 8, 2020 and Topsail Beach's State of Emergency Order updated on April 17, 2020 which extended a restriction on rentals less than 90 days to May 14, 2020. Please do not travel if not on the excluded list.

Social distancing policies has helped to lower the likelihood of the healthcare system becoming overloaded with a spike of many COVID-19 patients all at the same time. However, ending all social distancing at the end of April leads to a "greater than 50 percent probability that acute care and ICU bed capacity will be outstripped... as soon as Memorial Day."

If you are following known COVID-19 cases in North Carolina, you know these orders and Social Distancing appear to have started a flattening of the curve for North Carolina. However, we have not yet shown a reduction in cases for two weeks as outlined by the Governor. We are also seeing an extension of "Stay at Home" orders in states our visitors have their permanent residents – New York (May 15), West Virginia (open ended) and Virginia (June 10). By flattening the curve, we are saving lives so our hospitals are not overwhelmed by COVID-19 cases.

Now what is the next step. What are some of the questions one needs to ask:

- How do we get to a two week drop in the number of COVID-19 cases?
- Will there be a new spike of COVID-19 once we reopen?
- Do we have the resources to trace a COVID-19 infection case?
- Are vacation communities different from other communities in North Carolina?
- What happens if a vacationer has COVID-19; how is the quarantine handled?
- Does the rental community have the resources to clean properties correctly between visitors?
- What will Social Distancing look like in the future?
- Who will need to wear a mask? Do we have the equipment we need?

I am sure you have thoughts on these and other issues. Please know these and more questions are being asked. Opening our economy will require new standards on how we handle even our routine activities as well as understanding the liabilities. Our goal when we do decide it is time to go back to work is not will there be deaths due to COVID-19 but have we done all we can to reduce the number of deaths while protecting our citizens "well being" in all of its forms – financial, mental, values and health.

We can expect adjustments in many areas people did not believe were critical...Like washing your hands, tracking of infections, knowing available hospital resources, and staying home if you are sick. So, how do we stay ahead of the curve. It will be a stepped approach to bring our economy back up to a new normal — testing, tracking & trends must be understood. Please stay safe.

Regards Steve Smith, Mayor
Town of Topsail Beach