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Emergency extended and State of County and Townhall meeting canceled

For Immediate Release: Tuesday, March 17, 2020

Sponsored by: County Administrative Office

 Chair Kathryn Harrington

The Washington County Board of Commissioners voted today to extend until April 2 the county's prior declaration of emergency regarding the response to the new coronavirus. The [new emergency declaration](#) continues the authorizations, coordination and other actions first put in motion by board action on March 4, just after the county's first reported case of COVID-19. The County's emergency operations center (EOC) has also been partially activated since that time.

Chair Kathryn Harrington also announced through [a YouTube video](#) that she is canceling the annual State of the County address and the first of four townhall meetings in order to comply with statewide social distancing requirements to help curb the spread of COVID-19.

"Following the guidelines of public health officials is what we can all do to protect ourselves, our families, friends and our community," said Harrington via the YouTube video. "That's why I am doing my part by canceling the annual State of the County address and cancelling the first of our four Town Hall meetings."

The State of the County address was scheduled to occur on the evening of April 1 at Century High School in Hillsboro. The first Washington County townhall meeting for 2020 was to occur on the evening of March 19 at Sherwood City hall.

"The strategy our public health officials are following with COVID-19 is all about reserving the capacity of our health care system for those most vulnerable to disease....If we listen to our public health officials and follow these protective measures, we have the chance of 'flattening the curve' and saving the health care system for those most vulnerable to this new disease," said Harrington in the video, referring to the public health strategy of slowing the spread of disease through social distancing in order to maximize the availability of hospital beds, medical supplies and other critical resources needed by the most vulnerable.

Other actions being taken by Washington County to support social distancing include:

- Encouraging telecommuting as appropriate among county employees who can provide services remotely;
- Physically distancing employees and members of the public from one-another while in county buildings by a distance of at least six feet wherever possible;

- Canceling other non-essential advisory and other committee meetings, trainings, conferences, forums and gatherings that can be postponed and using online technology instead where appropriate;
- Restricting non-essential travel among county employees; and
- Planning for reduced numbers of county staff physically in county buildings who are focused on essential functions such as safety, public health, emergency coordination and others.

County public health officials continue to remind the public about simple steps everyone can take to stop the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands well and often;
- Cough and sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue;
- Stay home if sick;
- Cancel any gatherings, conferences or non-essential meetings;
- Avoiding social and other gatherings if you are over 60 or have underlying health conditions such as diabetes, lung, heart or similar disease; and
- Increase the physical space between each other in workplaces and other settings as appropriate.

Health officials also ask that the public stay informed and educated through trustworthy sources of information, such as the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), [Oregon Health Authority](#) and [Washington County Public Health Division](#).

General questions about COVID-19 can be answered by calling [2-1-1](#). Questions about your specific medical needs should be directed to your health care provider.

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