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Hillsborough County Emergency Policy Group Expected to Vote on Directive and Order on Thursday

COVID-19 Coronavirus Update No. 25

The Hillsborough County Emergency Policy Group this afternoon unanimously agreed to move forward with drafting a "Safer at Home" countywide directive and a "Curfew" order in an effort to curtail the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus in our community.

County Administrator Mike Merrill presented to the EPG the outline of the proposal, which he said is designed to take effective and reasonable steps to protect the health of Hillsborough County's 1.5 million residents, while avoiding long-term irreparable economic harm to local businesses and the economy.

Merrill will bring back the completed directive and curfew order to the EPG for a vote at their virtual meeting tomorrow, (Thursday, March 26) at 1:30 p.m. If approved, the directive and order would go into effect on Friday at 10 p.m.

The "Safer at Home" directive and "Curfew" order are expected to include multiple components aimed at having residents stay at home whenever possible. Highlights discussed by the EPG during today's meeting include:

- A curfew that would be from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. Monday through Friday, and a 24-hour curfew starting at 10 p.m. Friday through Monday at 5 a.m.
- Allowing residents the ability to obtain necessary food, medicine, and essentials, as well as being outdoors and enjoying recreation.
- Requiring essential businesses to have employees telecommute if possible.
- Allowing businesses whose employees cannot telecommute to stay open if employees can maintain a 6-foot distance from customers and fellow employees. Workers who could not maintain 6-foot physical distance from customers could not work; those

businesses that cannot by definition maintain the necessary physical distancing from customers would be required to close until further notice.

- Requiring essential businesses to provide employment opportunities to those who lose jobs because of this emergency by working directly with CareerSource and other designated employment and job agencies.

The "Curfew" order and "Safer at Home" directive would exempt persons who are doing essential work that cannot be performed at home, such as health care professionals, public safety employees, first responders, and food preparation and delivery.

A state of local emergency is in effect in Hillsborough County in response to COVID-19. Under this declaration, County Administrator Mike Merrill has the authority to carry out all emergency responsibilities delegated by the EPG, including taking whatever prudent action is necessary to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

The Hillsborough County Emergency Policy Group is comprised of three County Commissioners, the mayors from the cities of Plant City, Tampa, and Temple Terrace, the Sheriff, and Chairman of the School Board. Authority is granted by Article 8 of the Florida Constitution, Section 125.66 and Chapter 252, Florida Statutes. Hillsborough County enacted Hillsborough County Code of Ordinances and Laws Chapter 22, Article II, Sections 22-23 in order to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the County's residents during declared emergencies.

Information from First Day of COVID-19 Community Collection Site

The first COVID-19 coronavirus testing site opened today at Raymond James Stadium. The drive-thru Community Collection Site is for symptomatic residents. Today, health care professionals collected samples from 188 persons. Another 80 people were not tested because they did not meet the qualifications. The drive-thru testing site will remain operational from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. tomorrow, and as long as there is a supply of collection kits available.

In order to be tested, residents must be pre-registered through the Hillsborough County Customer Service Center at (813) 272-5900. The call center is augmented with health care staff Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. A total of 1,770 COVID-19 calls were

answered at the Call Center today, of which 1,669 were in English and 101 were in Spanish. Of those calls, 766 calls were referred to health care specialists conducting prescreening for the drive-thru testing.

Get Connected. Stay Alert.

For more information on COVID-19, and any other potential emergency in the county, visit **HCFLGov.net/StaySafe** and sign up for the HCFL Alert system. Additionally, you can follow Hillsborough County on social media at Facebook, Twitter, and Nextdoor for updates. For general County information, call (813) 272-5900, the County's main information line.