



PRESS RELEASE:
April 17, 2020



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The following letter was sent to Governor Brown on Friday requesting approval for a pilot project to begin re-opening Harney County:

**From the Offices Of:
Senator Lynn Findley & Representative Mark Owens**

Governor Kate Brown
900 Court St. NE, Room 254
Salem, OR 97301
April 17, 2020

RE: Proposal Request for Pilot Project approval in Harney County
Honorable Governor Brown,

The current pandemic is taking its toll on people around the globe. There is suffering, loss, heartache, economic consequences, and significant disruption in all of our lives. So far, our local community has been largely spared the physical effects of the virus, but economic consequences and disruption to daily life are very real. We want to know how much longer it will last.

We write to share a proposed Pilot Project in the uniquely isolated Harney County. Given Harney County's circumstances – no positive COVID-19 cases, small population (7,393), an EMS service, hospital, and public health department that have worked diligently to prepare for a surge of COVID-19 patients – its elected officials have begun, and agree, to continue to work with local experts and stakeholders to prepare a re-opening plan to put forth for your approval.

With support from the state. we have laid forth what needs to happen for Harney County

to meet all of the requirements that were laid out in the press conference on April 14, 2020 regarding the framework to restart our economy. A pilot in Harney County would be invaluable for the state to identify lessons learned and apply them for broader implementation. We and the Harney County Court understand the health and well-being of our citizens is our top priority and will make sure this remains a priority. We also acknowledge that the health and economic well-being of our community are not independent of each other.

In your recent press conference, you laid out the main areas that would need to be addressed before Oregon's businesses can be re-opened. We list your focus areas below along with Harney County's plan to meet all of the goals if the proposed Pilot Project is approved to move forward:

1. Declining growth rate of active cases and surge capacity at the local hospital

Harney County currently has zero confirmed cases of COVID-19. We realize this may change as more testing becomes available.

Harney District Hospital has developed a solid surge plan and has the capacity to treat several COVID-19 positive patients. However, due to limited staff and equipment the ability to transfer the most critically ill patients to larger hospitals in Bend or Boise would be required in a surge. Our EMS service currently has two paramedics, which limits the number of critically-ill patients who can realistically be transferred per day via ambulance. Multiple transfers in the same day would require more collaboration with air ambulance providers.

2. Sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) for our medical staff and first responders.

Harney County is working with the Harney District Hospital and Public Health Department to identify the PPE that will be needed with the increased burn rate that may occur with a potential surge of COVID-19 cases. Harney District Hospital is starting to accumulate a good supply of surgery and procedure masks and has a good supply of gloves. It is estimated the hospital would need approximately 40 N95 masks per day in the event of a surge. They have 1,469 N95 masks currently and are having a hard time getting new N95 masks from their suppliers. This is an area where the state may be able to provide more assistance, the hospital will continue to require PPE assistance from the state centralized procurement.

3. Robust public health framework:

a. Contract tracing system and ability to isolate.

In conjunction with business, emergency management and others, we will have a plan in place for tracing, isolation, and quarantine. We ask that someone from Oregon Health Authority (OHA) be immediately available to help with this plan on a local level.

b. Robust testing.

Harney County will need help from the state to augment testing capabilities. We anticipate the need to test around 27-30 people per week. This is based on the 15,000 daily test amount that has been indicated would be necessary for the state, divided by the population.

Harney District Hospital currently has 38 testing media on hand. Turnaround time for these tests is between four to seven days. The hospital has the capacity to run tests on site using a machine from Cepheid. These tests have a 45-minute turnaround. However, due to being low on the priority list, efforts to secure cartridges for these tests have so far been unsuccessful.

c. A plan in place for quarantine and isolating those that test positive, needs to include nursing homes and homeless.

Harney County has contacted the assisted living provider in the County and will make sure proper procedures are devolved in coordination with them to protect those that are most vulnerable. Fortunately, Harney County has a limited homeless population compared to other parts of the state. The quarantine isolation can be handled in the home unit with volunteer cooperation. The need for a fast turnaround on testing will be a must.

4. The ability to implement the CDC guidelines on social distancing. Harney County wants to work directly with the County Environmental Health Specialist and other state agencies to develop implementation guidelines on the below suggestions.

a. Restaurants – allow seating in every other booth; maintain social distancing when the waiter/waitress brings the bill to the table; menus, tables, booths, etc., sanitized after each use.

b. Bars – limited stools spaced apart at the counter; same service and sanitation practices as above for seated service; limited hours (e.g. close by 9:00 pm.)

c. Boutique shops – limit occupancy to an allotted number of customer based on square footage of the shops. All shops have sanitizer at their entrance and people are instructed to use it upon entering and exiting the business. Business owners then sanitize credit card machines after each use, doorknobs, all touch points sanitized hourly. Shop owners could place 'check-in and check-out' logbooks with times to track patrons should there be a break out case.

d. Cosmetologists – by appointment only could easily schedule for social distancing and sanitize using regular standard practices between clients; use of masks and other sanitation materials and products.

e. Barbers – could reduce the number of chairs and space them out properly; limit the number of clients waiting for a haircut or allowed in the business. Sanitize between cuts and use of masks.

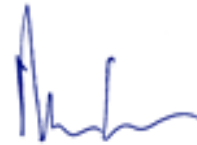
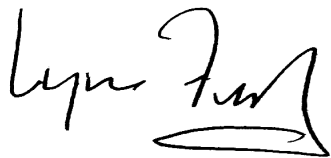
f. Small and boutique gyms – can easily segregate equipment, limit customers and sanitize equipment following use following standard practices already in place.

These serve as practical examples, but the bottom line is Oregonians are highly aware and social distancing will now be a new normal in our lifestyles. Many precautions we now see in place at grocery stores and other businesses will remain, such as plexiglass barriers between cashiers and customers. We expect to see this as a new normal in new/remodel construction in our establishments

We urge you to take Harney County's proposal as a stepping-stone. We understand this plan needs to be finalized with OHA and the Governor's office and would specifically ask that this cooperation begin immediately. The point-of-contact for Harney County is Harney County Court Judge Pete Runnels. He can be reached at 541-573-6356 or pete.runnels@co.harney.or.us.

This Pilot Project will benefit the rest of the state through lessons learned during this re-opening process. The Harney County Commissioners sent a letter on Tuesday, April 14, 2020 requesting that statewide restrictions be eased slowly in Harney County by May 1. This is an excellent opportunity for a Pilot Project, and we understand that having everything in place may be a longer process.

Harney County, like many of our smaller communities, is in dire need of revenue and at least a partial return to the "new normal". We stand ready to help in the facilitation of this process. Please let us help this be a success for rural Oregon and the entire state.
Sincerely,



Senator Lynn Findley Representative Mark Owens
Senate District 30 House District 60

If you have any comments or recommendations regarding the aforementioned letter, we would love to hear from you. Please send responses to:

rep.markowens@oregonlegislature.gov within the next 24 hours so that we

rep.markowens@oregonlegislature.gov within the next 24 hours so that we might include your suggestions in talks with Governor Brown occurring this week.

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