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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Martin County, NC Coronavirus COVID-19 Response – Advisory #8 State of Emergency Amended to Allow Electronic Public Meetings and To Suspend Water Utility Cut-offs, Accrual of Penalties / Late Fees

WILLIAMSTON, NC – Martin County continues to remain in close and constant communication with local, state and federal health care and emergency response officials as we prepare for the potential risks posed by the continuing escalation of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) throughout North Carolina.

The Martin County State of Emergency, which was originally effective March 18, 2020, was amended on April 1, 2020 as follows:

- For the purpose of holding Board of Commissioner meetings electronically during this emergency, the limitations on remote meeting participation / establishment of a quorum as stated in Section 3a of the Martin County Board of Commissioners Rules of Procedure (Adopted on May 11, 2011 and amended on October 12, 2016) has been suspended.
- In compliance with Governor Cooper's Executive Order No. 124, utility cut-offs due to non-payment in Martin County Water Districts No. 1 and No. 2 and accrual of late fees and penalties have been suspended for the duration of this State of Emergency.

The amended State of Emergency is attached. Martin County will hold its regular, monthly Board of Commissioners meeting on April 8, 2020 electronically. Information about how the public can participate in this electronic meeting will be shared in the near future.

As of March 31, 2020, the Martin-Tyrrell-Washington (MTW) District Health Department announced three confirmed cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Martin County. The MTW District Health Department will continue to closely monitor confirmed cases in Martin County. The MTW District Health Department will no longer publish press releases for each positive result due to community transmission of COVID-19 in the area; however, the health department plans to issue summary reports of confirmed cases in the district on a daily basis.

The MTW District Health Department recommends the following practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Practice “Social Distancing” of at least 6 feet from the nearest person, especially if you are in the high-risk population (65 years and older and people with underlying health conditions or a compromised immune system).
- Practice good hygiene, including washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, using hand sanitizer, avoid shaking hands, covering coughs with elbows (not hands), and staying away from others if you are sick.
- Avoid smoking and vaping. Smoking or vaping irritates the respiratory system, making it easier to develop infections. Sharing cigarettes or electronic vaping devices can contribute to spread of the virus.
- Avoid panic. Most COVID-19 cases are mild and patients have been making full recoveries. Panic only adds more stress to the healthcare system and prevents us from taking care of ourselves and our fellow residents.

Martin County encourages its citizens to respect Governor Roy Cooper’s Stay at Home Order (Executive Order No. 121). Citizens are asked to remain calm during this challenging time and to continue educating themselves about the latest guidelines available from local, state and federal health care authorities concerning the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Visit www.mtwdistricthealth.org for the latest information on COVID-19 (coronavirus).

As per Center for Disease Control (CDC) advice, citizens are advised to stay at home if they are sick, or if they have a sick family member in their home. Citizens who have questions or concerns or who are showing signs of symptoms of the virus are strongly encouraged to call their primary physician or MTW District Health at 252-793-3023 for information and/or further instructions.

Public access to the Martin County offices and facilities continues to be restricted to appointments only, with limited exceptions. Staff will continue to be available to serve the public by phone and email from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Public access to all County offices (except for the Sheriff’s Office) will be available by appointment only. The Martin County Sheriff’s Office (entrance at the rear of the Governmental Center / Courthouse) will remain open to the public at this time. This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and remain in effect at least through Friday, April 17, 2020. The Martin County Senior Centers are closed. The Martin County Landfill and Martin County Airport remain open to the public.

The Martin County License Plate Agency remains closed to the public but open to dealers by appointment only. The Martin County Driver’s License Office remains closed, but many common NCDMV services, such as driver license renewal and vehicle registration renewal can be performed any time and any place by visiting <https://www.ncdot.gov/dmv>.

Court facilities will continue to be available on an as-needed basis through the Sheriff’s Office entrance. Most NC District and Superior Court cases are to be postponed at least 30 days in response to COVID-19. For specific questions about individual cases, visit www.nccourts.gov or call the Martin County Clerk of Superior Court at 252-809-5100.

Citizens are strongly encouraged to conduct county business online, by phone, by mail and through drop boxes. Taxes may be paid online at www.martincountyncgov.com or by mail. Water payments can be paid via mail or through a drop box located in the parking lot of the Martin County Governmental Center near the flagpoles. Completed Department of Social Services (DSS) applications may be placed in the drop box located near the entry door (near the “Social Services” sign) at 305 E. Main Street, at the back of the governmental center / courthouse.