



GASTON COUNTY PHASE I RE-OPENING ORDER

REVISED ORDER OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE GASTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, MADE IN CONSULTATION WITH THE GASTON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTOR, THE DIRECTOR OF THE GASTON COUNTY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AS WELL AS THE CLINICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP OF CARAMONT HEALTH;

RE-OPENING GASTON COUNTY FOR BUSINESS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WHITE HOUSE'S PHASE I GUIDANCE, WHILE CLARIFYING THAT GASTON COUNTY RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES ARE STILL SUBJECT TO AND RESTRICTED BY ANY AND ALL OF THE GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE ORDERS UNLESS AND UNTIL THEY EXPIRE OR ARE OTHERWISE REPLACED, RESCINDED, OR ELIMINATED;

EXEMPTING INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS FROM ANY REMAINING LOCAL RESTRICTIONS BUT URGING THEM TO FIND SHELTER;

WHEREAS, the North Carolina General Assembly has adopted Article 1A of Chapter 166A of the General Statutes, entitled "North Carolina Emergency Management Act", which sets forth the authority and responsibility of the Governor, State agencies, and local governments in prevention of, preparation for, response to, and recovery from emergencies; and

WHEREAS, G.S. §166A-19.22, which is part of the North Carolina Emergency Management Act, authorizes counties to declare a state of emergency under conditions and following procedures contained in G.S. §166A-19.22; and

WHEREAS, G.S. §166A-19.31, which is also part of the North Carolina Emergency Management, authorizes counties to put prohibitions and restrictions in place for its people, businesses, travel, and other activities or conditions reasonably necessary to maintain order and protect lives or property during the state of emergency; and

WHEREAS, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has created a state of emergency in the County of Gaston and the municipalities within its borders; and

WHEREAS, the Governor has declared a state of emergency on behalf of the state of North Carolina on March 10, 2020; and

WHEREAS, Gaston County declared a State of Emergency on March 15, 2020; and

WHEREAS, Gaston County ordered all gyms and fitness centers throughout the County to be closed as of noon on March 18, 2020 after thorough consultation with the Gaston County Public Health Department and the Gaston County Office of Emergency Management; and

WHEREAS, Gaston County restricted gatherings of people in public places and the operation of business activity, entertainment, events or other places of mass gatherings as reasonably necessary to overcome or prevent further aggravation of the emergency, and any other activities or conditions whereby the control of which maybe be reasonably necessary to maintain order and protect lives or property during the state of emergency; and

WHEREAS, scientific evidence and best practices regarding the most effective approaches to slow the transmission of communicable diseases generally and COVID-19 particularly, and evidence that age, condition and health of a significant portion of the population of the County and municipalities within its borders places the population at risk of serious health complications, including death from COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, many individuals who contract the virus display no symptoms or have mild symptoms which means they may not be aware they carry the virus. People without symptoms can transmit the disease and because evidence shows the disease is easily spread, mass gatherings can result in further transmissions of the virus; and

WHEREAS, recent data shows that Gaston County has been effected by COVID-19 to a different degree than more densely-populated areas of the State and no longer requires the same restrictions and limitations that have been placed upon it and all counties at the state level; and

WHEREAS, this Order and Declaration is necessary let people throughout Gaston County know that Gaston County is ready to reopen for business once the Governor lifts the statewide restrictions that are still binding upon the individuals and businesses throughout North Carolina.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED THAT:

Gaston County Poised to Re-Open for Business. This Order is to ensure that the people of Gaston County know that Gaston County plans to reopen for business by limiting capacity through social distancing, strict sanitation and hygiene measures, and will continue to work with the Governor to relax or otherwise lift state-level restrictions. Gaston County shall use the guidelines established by the White House’s Coronavirus Task Force in reopening the County for business. Gaston County will move through the White House’s step-by-step phases in accordance with data-driven benchmarks that align with each step of the Task Force’s guidance.

Vulnerable Individuals. All vulnerable individuals should continue to stay at home. Members of households with vulnerable residents should be aware that by returning to work or other environments where distancing is not practical, they could carry the virus back home. Precautions should be taken to isolate from vulnerable residents.

All Individuals. Individuals, when in public (e.g., parks, outdoor recreation areas, shopping areas), should maximize physical distance from others. Social settings of more than 10 people,

where appropriate distancing may not be practical, should be avoided unless precautionary measures are observed.

Social Gatherings. Individuals should continue to avoid socializing in groups of more than 10 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing (e.g., receptions, trade shows) minimize non-essential travel and adhere to CDC guidelines regarding isolation following travel.

All Employers. Employers should continue to encourage telework, whenever possible and feasible with business operations. Employers should also, whenever possible, return to work in phases. Employers should close common areas where personnel are likely to congregate and interact, or enforce strict social distancing protocols. Employers should also minimize non-essential travel and adhere to CDC guidelines regarding isolation following travel. Employers should also strongly consider special accommodations for personnel who are members of a vulnerable population.

Specific Types of Employers.

- Schools and organized youth activities (e.g., daycare, camp) that are currently closed should remain closed.
- Visits to senior living facilities and hospitals should be prohibited. Those who do interact with residents and patients must adhere to strict protocols regarding hygiene, as already ordered.
- Large venues (e.g., sit-down dining, movie theaters, sporting venues, places of worship) can operate under strict physical distancing protocols.
- Elective surgeries can resume, as clinically appropriate, on an outpatient basis at facilities that adhere to CMS guidelines.
- Gyms can open if they adhere to strict physical distancing and sanitation protocols.
- Bars should remain closed, but Gaston County orders restaurants with bars located within its building to simply prohibit patrons from congregating around the bar.

Individuals and Businesses Licensed through a State Board. In addition to local and state-level restrictions, those individuals and businesses licensed through a state board are strongly encouraged to follow the directives of their respective licensing boards.

Victims of Domestic Violence. Individuals whose residences are unsafe or become unsafe, such as victims of domestic violence, are permitted and urged to leave their home and stay at a safe alternative location.

Long Term Care Risk Mitigation Measures. This Section places mandatory requirements on skilled nursing facilities. This Section requires the same measures, to the extent possible given constraints on the availability of personal protective equipment, for other kinds of long term care facilities, including adult care homes, family care homes, mental health group homes, and intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

- a. **Mitigation Measures.** Skilled nursing facilities shall:
- i. Require staff to stay home when they are ill and prevent any staff who are ill from coming to work and/or staying at work.
 - ii. Screen all staff at the beginning of their shift for fever and respiratory symptoms. This shall include:
 - a. Actively taking that staff member's temperature; and
 - b. Documenting an absence of any shortness of breath, any new cough or changes in cough, and any sore throat.

If the staff members is ill, the facility must have the staff member put on a facemask and leave the workplace.
 - iii. Cancel communal dining and all group activities, including internal and external activities.
 - iv. Implement universal use of facemasks for all staff while in the facility, assuming supplies are available.
 - v. Actively monitor all residents upon admission, and at least daily, for fever and respiratory symptoms (shortness of breath, new cough or change in cough, and sore throat), and shall continue to monitor residents.
 - vi. Notify the local health department immediately about either of the following:
 - a. Any resident with new, confirmed, or suspected COVID-19.
 - b. A cluster of residents or staff with symptoms of respiratory illness. A "cluster" means three or more people (residents or staff) with new-onset respiratory symptoms in a 72-hour period.
- b. **Other kinds of long term care facilities.** Adult care homes, family care homes, mental health group homes, and intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities are required to follow the mitigation measures listed in (i) through (vi) above, assuming supplies are available.

This Order is issued in accordance with, and incorporates by reference, the March 15, 2020 Order of a State of Emergency issued by the Gaston County Board of Commissioners Chairman and the Order of the State of Emergency issued by the Governor on March 10, 2020.


This Order will be valid unless and until it is repealed, replaced, or rescinded by another applicable order. This Order will be regularly reviewed and evaluated and may be revised,

Any person violating any prohibition or restriction imposed by this Order as authorized by the Joint Order of State of Emergency shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor in accordance with G.S. §14-288.20A.

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Order is for any reason held to be invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of the Order. The signatories hereby declare that it would have passed this Order and each section, subsection, clause, and phrase thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses, or phrases be declared invalid.


This Order is adopted and shall take effect on the 29th day of April, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:


Jonathan Lee Sink
County Attorney


Tracy Philbeck, Chairman
Gaston County Board of Commissioners


ATTEST:


Donna S. Buff, Clerk to the Board
Gaston County Board of Commissioners

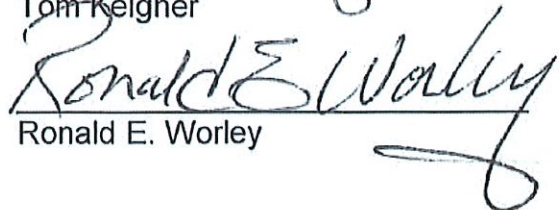

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