

**TUSCOLA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BOARD MEETING AGENDA - Corrected**

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 2021 – 09:00 A.M.

125 W. Lincoln Street
Caro, MI 48723

Phone: 989-672-3700
Fax: 989-672-4011

**Electronic remote access will be implemented for this meeting,
in accordance with the Department of Health and Human Services Emergency
Order under MCL 333-2253 Gathering Prohibition and Face Covering Order and
Public Act No. 254 of 2020.**

***To participate in the Electronic Meeting, you can
Join by phone:
(US) +1 503-773-0917 PIN: 479 769 372#
or
Join by Google Meet:
meet.google.com/brz-qemd-spp***

9:00 A.M. Call to Order – Chairperson Bardwell
Prayer – Commissioner Vaughan
Pledge of Allegiance – Commissioner Bardwell
Roll Call – Clerk Fetting
Adoption of Agenda
Brief Public Comment Period for Agenda Items Only
Consent Agenda Resolution - None

County Updates

- Ann Hepfer, Health Officer
- Steve Anderson, Emergency Manager

New Business

- Potential Declaration of a Local State of Emergency

Old Business - None

Correspondence/Resolutions

COMMISSIONER LIAISON COMMITTEE REPORTS

VAUGHAN

Board of Health
County Planning Commission
Economic Development Corp/Brownfield Redevelopment
MAC Environmental Regulatory
Mid-Michigan Mosquito Control Advisory Committee
NACO-Energy, Environment & Land Use
Parks and Recreation Commission
Tuscola County Fair Board Liaison
Local Units of Government Activity Report

GRIMSHAW

Behavioral Health Systems Board
Recycling Advisory
Local Units of Government
Jail Planning Committee
MI Renewable Energy Coalition (MREC)

DURUSSEL

Board of Health
Community Corrections Advisory Board
Dept. of Human Services/Medical Care Facility Liaison
Genesee Shiawassee Thumb Works
Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)
MAC Judiciary Committee
MEMS All Hazard
Local Units of Government Activity Report

BARDWELL

Behavioral Health Systems Board
Caro DDA/TIFA
Economic Development Corp/Brownfield Redevelopment
MAC 7th District
MAC Workers Comp Board
MAC Finance Committee
TRIAD
Local Units of Government Activity Report

YOUNG

Board of Public Works
County Road Commission Liaison
Dispatch Authority Board
Genesee Shiawassee Thumb Works
Great Start Collaborative
Human Services Collaborative Council (HSCC)
Jail Planning Committee
MAC Agricultural/Tourism Committee
Region VI Economic Development Planning
Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative
Senior Services Advisory Council
Tuscola 2020
Local Units of Government Activity Report

Other Business as Necessary

Extended Public Comment

Adjournment

Note: If you need accommodations to attend this meeting, please notify the Tuscola County Controller/Administrator's Office (989-672-3700) two days in advance of the meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE

- 1. Potential Declaration of a Local State of Emergency Request from Steve Anderson**
- 2. Draft Tuscola County Declaration of a Local State of Emergency Related to COVID-19**
- 3. County of Mecosta Letter**
- 4. Health Department Press Release – March 28, 2021**
- 5. Huron Daily Tribune Article – March 29, 2021**

TUSCOLA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

125 W. Lincoln Street
Caro, Michigan 48723

Telephone 989-672-3700
Fax 989-672-4011

March 31, 2021

Tuscola County Declaration of a Local State of Emergency related to COVID-19

The novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease that can result in serious illness or death. It is caused by a new strain a coronavirus that had not been previously identified in humans and can easily spread from person to person and has continue to mutate as this public health emergency unfolds.

On March 10, 2020, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer issued Executive Order 2020-04, which declared a "State of Emergency" throughout the State of Michigan related to COVID-19. On this same date, the State of Michigan had the first two patients test positive for COVID-19.

On March 20, 2020, Tuscola County Officials were made aware of the first confirmed case of COVID-19 within Tuscola County. On March 25, 2020, Tuscola County had its first confirmed COVID-19 death.

As of March 27, 2021, Tuscola County has had 3815 positive/probable COVID-19 cases and 140 COVID-19 confirmed/probable deaths. Our latest testing rate shows that Tuscola County has gone from an average positivity rate of 12.9% to 21% in a week's time.

Because of the continued rise of positive COVID-19 cases and the negative impact that is occurring within the county, including the closure of the Treasurer's Office, Information Technology and State Court Administrators Office moving the Courthouse back to Phase 1, Tuscola County in an effort to maximize efforts to slow the further spread of COVID-19, is declaring a Local State of Emergency under Section 10 of 1976 PA 390, as amended. This local State of Emergency declaration confirms that the Tuscola County Emergency Operations Plan will be continued to be utilized and all local resources have and will continue to be utilized to the fullest possible extent.

This Declaration will also allow all units of government within Tuscola County if desired the ability to continue with the Virtual Meetings under the current Open Meetings Act; MCL15.263a.

The Tuscola County Office of Emergency Management will continue to provide liaison and coordination with State and Federal authorities for assistance related to this ongoing pandemic, and in accordance with Section 14 of PA 390, as amended as directed to transmit this request to the Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division of the Michigan State Police.

This Local State of Emergency will be in effect through April 29, 2021, unless further action is taken by the Tuscola County Board of Commissioners.

Respectfully,

Thomas Bardwell, Board Chair
Tuscola County Board of Commissioners



Tuscola County Office of Emergency Management

A division of the Tuscola County Sheriff's Office



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March 29, 2021

To: Thomas Bardwell, Board Chair

Reference: Potential Declaration of a Local State of Emergency

Sir,

As you are well aware, Tuscola County has been dealing with the Coronavirus Epidemic for the last year. During this difficult time, Tuscola County has had 3815 cases with 140 deaths related to COVID-19 (as of March 27, 2021) As a result of COVID-19 many things have changed including the use of virtual meetings for boards and commission to get local government affairs completed.

As you and all the board members are aware, March 31st marks the end for the virtual component for all governmental meetings. Unfortunately, with this also comes a time when Tuscola County is suffering through the highest positivity rate in COVID-19 testing. As reported by our Health Officer, Ann Hepfer our latest weekly totals show that we have a positivity rate of 21% which is a drastic increase from the previous week which was only 12.9%.

Taking this information and the recent quarantining of two very important departments: the Treasurer's Office and Information Technology and the State Court Administrative Office recently pushing our Courts back to Phase 1, I am asking for the commissioners to consider passing a formal "Declaration of a State of Emergency" related to COVID-19.

By potentially approving this Declaration, you are showing your continued support for the health and safety of your employees and the citizens of Tuscola County. More importantly this Declaration will allow all governmental units within the County to continue with the virtual meeting option if they choose.

Respectfully,

Deputy Steven Anderson

420 Court St. Suite #1 Caro, MI 48723

www.tuscolacounty.org/emergency/

989-673-5181

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COUNTY OF MECOSTA
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
400 ELM STREET, BIG RAPIDS, MI 49307
Phone (231) 796-2505 Fax (231) 592-0121
www.mecostacounty.org

- Marilynn Bradstrom
District #1
- Jerrilynn Strong
District #2
- Linda Howard
District #3
- Raymond Steinke
District #4
- Tom O'Neil
District #5
- Wendy Nystrom
District #6
- William Routley
District #7
- Paul E. Bullock
Controller/Administrator

To: Mecosta County Board of Commissioners

From: Paul Bullock, Administrator *PB*

Date: March 12, 2021

Re: Declaration of a State of Emergency

At the direction of our Chairperson, please find attached a resolution to declare a county wide state of emergency at the March 18th meeting. I will be asking you to add this to the new business section of the meeting at item 6-6. The purpose of this is to allow public bodies within the County the option of continuing to hold virtual or hybrid meetings and remain in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.

Currently the State covers us thru March 31st, but that will be the end of that. Under the amended OMA a public body may continue to hold virtual or hybrid meetings if a local state of emergency is in place.

This is being submitted to you on advice of the Michigan Association of Counties and our Corporate Counsel. The concern is that without this option we simply don't have a large enough area to hold a socially distanced meeting if more than a handful of citizens want to attend. Our Attorney says if we can't accommodate the public, and we don't have this option, we should recess the meeting until we can. Not an option given our facilities.

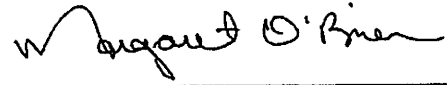
If adopted, this option will also be available to all "public bodies" within the County. I am advising the City, MOISD, Big Rapids Public Schools, and the Townships Association of this.

If you have questions, please let me know. I am attaching the proposed resolution for your information. Also attached is the memo from our Corporate Counsel.

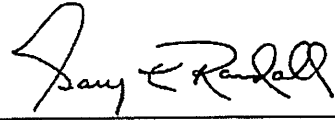
Attachments:

- Client Update/David Stoker
- Proposed Resolution #2021-07

This act is ordered to take immediate effect.



Secretary of the Senate



Clerk of the House of Representatives

Approved _____

Governor

Act No. 254
Public Acts of 2020
Approved by the Governor
December 22, 2020
Filed with the Secretary of State
December 22, 2020
EFFECTIVE DATE: December 22, 2020

**STATE OF MICHIGAN
100TH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2020**

Introduced by Senator Theis

ENROLLED SENATE BILL No. 1246

AN ACT to amend 1976 PA 267, entitled "An act to require certain meetings of certain public bodies to be open to the public; to require notice and the keeping of minutes of meetings; to provide for enforcement; to provide for invalidation of governmental decisions under certain circumstances; to provide penalties; and to repeal certain acts and parts of acts," by amending sections 3 and 3a (MCL 15.263 and 15.263a), section 3 as amended and section 3a as added by 2020 PA 228.

The People of the State of Michigan enact:

Sec. 3. (1) All meetings of a public body must be open to the public and must be held in a place available to the general public. All persons must be permitted to attend any meeting except as otherwise provided in this act. The right of a person to attend a meeting of a public body includes the right to tape-record, to videotape, to broadcast live on radio, and to telecast live on television the proceedings of a public body at a public meeting. The exercise of this right does not depend on the prior approval of the public body. However, a public body may establish reasonable rules and regulations in order to minimize the possibility of disrupting the meeting. For a meeting of a public body held in person before April 1, 2021, the public body shall do both of the following:

(a) To the extent feasible under the circumstances, ensure adherence to social distancing and mitigation measures recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for purposes of preventing the spread of COVID-19, including the measure that an individual remain at least 6 feet from anyone from outside the individual's household.

(b) Adopt heightened standards of facility cleaning and disinfection to limit participant exposure to COVID-19, as well as protocols to clean and disinfect in the event of a positive COVID-19 case in the public body's meeting place.

(2) All decisions of a public body must be made at a meeting open to the public. For purposes of any meeting subject to this section, except a meeting of any state legislative body at which a formal vote is taken, the public body shall, subject to section 3a, establish the following procedures to accommodate the absence of any member of the public body due to military duty, a medical condition, or a statewide or local state of emergency or state of disaster declared pursuant to law or charter or local ordinance by the governor or a local official, governing body, or chief administrative officer that would risk the personal health or safety of members of the public or the public body if the meeting were held in person:

(a) Procedures by which the absent member may participate in, and vote on, business before the public body, including, but not limited to, procedures that provide for both of the following:

(i) Two-way communication.

(ii) For each member of the public body attending the meeting remotely, a public announcement at the outset of the meeting by that member, to be included in the meeting minutes, that the member is in fact attending the meeting remotely. If the member is attending the meeting remotely for a purpose other than for military duty, the member's announcement must further identify specifically the member's physical location by stating the county, city, township, or village and state from which he or she is attending the meeting remotely.

(b) Procedures by which the public is provided notice of the absence of the member and information about how to contact that member sufficiently in advance of a meeting of the public body to provide input on any business that will come before the public body.

(3) All deliberations of a public body constituting a quorum of its members must take place at a meeting open to the public except as provided in this section and sections 7 and 8.

(4) A person must not be required as a condition of attendance at a meeting of a public body to register or otherwise provide his or her name or other information or otherwise to fulfill a condition precedent to attendance.

(5) A person must be permitted to address a meeting of a public body under rules established and recorded by the public body. The legislature or a house of the legislature may provide by rule that the right to address may be limited to prescribed times at hearings and committee meetings only.

(6) A person must not be excluded from a meeting otherwise open to the public except for a breach of the peace actually committed at the meeting.

(7) This act does not apply to the following public bodies, but only when deliberating the merits of a case:

(a) The Michigan compensation appellate commission operating as described in either of the following:

(i) Section 274 of the worker's disability compensation act of 1969, 1969 PA 317, MCL 418.274.

(ii) Section 34 of the Michigan employment security act, 1936 (Ex Sess) PA 1, 421.34.

(b) The state tenure commission created in section 1 of article VII of 1937 (Ex Sess) PA 4, MCL 38.131, when acting as a board of review from the decision of a controlling board.

(c) The employment relations commission or an arbitrator or arbitration panel created or appointed under 1939 PA 176, MCL 423.1 to 423.30.

(d) The Michigan public service commission created under 1939 PA 3, MCL 460.1 to 460.11.

(8) This act does not apply to an association of insurers created under the insurance code of 1956, 1956 PA 218, MCL 500.100 to 500.8302, or other association or facility formed under that act as a nonprofit organization of insurer members.

(9) This act does not apply to a committee of a public body that adopts a nonpolicymaking resolution of tribute or memorial, if the resolution is not adopted at a meeting.

(10) This act does not apply to a meeting that is a social or chance gathering or conference not designed to avoid this act.

(11) This act does not apply to the Michigan veterans' trust fund board of trustees or a county or district committee created under 1946 (1st Ex Sess) PA 9, MCL 35.602 to 35.610, when the board of trustees or county or district committee is deliberating the merits of an emergent need. A decision of the board of trustees or county or district committee made under this subsection must be reconsidered by the board or committee at its next regular or special meeting consistent with the requirements of this act. "Emergent need" means a situation that the board of trustees, by rules promulgated under the administrative procedures act of 1969, 1969 PA 306, MCL 24.201 to 24.328, determines requires immediate action.

(12) As used in subsection (2):

(a) "Formal vote" means a vote on a bill, amendment, resolution, motion, proposal, recommendation, or any other measure on which a vote by members of a state legislative body is required and by which the state legislative body effectuates or formulates public policy.

(b) "Medical condition" means an illness, injury, disability, or other health-related condition.

Sec. 3a. (1) A meeting of a public body held, in whole or in part, electronically by telephonic or video conferencing in compliance with this section and, except as otherwise required in this section, all of the provisions of this act applicable to a nonelectronic meeting, is permitted by this act in the following circumstances:

(a) Before March 31, 2021 and retroactive to March 18, 2020, any circumstances, including, but not limited to, any of the circumstances requiring accommodation of absent members described in section 3(2).

(b) On and after March 31, 2021 through December 31, 2021, only those circumstances requiring accommodation of members absent for the reasons described in section 3(2). For the purpose of permitting an electronic meeting due to a local state of emergency or state of disaster, this subdivision applies only as follows:

(i) To permit the electronic attendance of a member of the public body who resides in the affected area.

(ii) To permit the electronic meeting of a public body that usually holds its meetings in the affected area.

(c) After December 31, 2021, only in the circumstances requiring accommodation of members absent due to military duty as described in section 3(2).

(2) A meeting of a public body held electronically under this section must be conducted in a manner that permits 2-way communication so that members of the public body can hear and be heard by other members of the public body, and so that public participants can hear members of the public body and can be heard by members of the public body and other participants during a public comment period. A public body may use technology to facilitate typed public comments during the meeting submitted by members of the public participating in the meeting that may be read to or shared with members of the public body and other participants to satisfy the requirement under this subsection that members of the public be heard by others during the electronic meeting and the requirement under section 3(5) that members of the public be permitted to address the electronic meeting.

(3) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (8), a physical place is not required for an electronic meeting held under this section, and members of a public body and members of the public participating electronically in a meeting held under this section that occurs in a physical place are to be considered present and in attendance at the meeting for all purposes.

(4) If a public body directly or indirectly maintains an official internet presence that includes monthly or more frequent updates of public meeting agendas or minutes, the public body shall, in addition to any other notices that may be required under this act, post advance notice of a meeting held electronically under this section on a portion of the public body's website that is fully accessible to the public. The public notice on the website must be included on either the homepage or on a separate webpage dedicated to public notices for nonregularly scheduled or electronic public meetings that is accessible through a prominent and conspicuous link on the website's homepage that clearly describes its purpose for public notification of nonregularly scheduled or electronic public meetings. Subject to the requirements of this section, any scheduled meeting of a public body may be held as an electronic meeting under this section if a notice consistent with this section is posted at least 18 hours before the meeting begins. Notice of a meeting of a public body held electronically must clearly explain all of the following:

(a) Why the public body is meeting electronically.

(b) How members of the public may participate in the meeting electronically. If a telephone number, internet address, or both are needed to participate, that information must be provided specifically.

(c) How members of the public may contact members of the public body to provide input or ask questions on any business that will come before the public body at the meeting.

(d) How persons with disabilities may participate in the meeting.

(5) Beginning on the effective date of the amendatory act that added this section, if an agenda exists for an electronic meeting held under this section by a public body that directly or indirectly maintains an official internet presence that includes monthly or more frequent updates of public meeting agendas or minutes, the public body shall, on a portion of the website that is fully accessible to the public, make the agenda available to the public at least 2 hours before the electronic meeting begins. This publication of the agenda does not prohibit subsequent amendment of the agenda at the meeting.

(6) A public body shall not, as a condition of participating in an electronic meeting of the public body held under this section, require a person to register or otherwise provide his or her name or other information or otherwise to fulfill a condition precedent to attendance, other than mechanisms established and required by the public body necessary to permit the person to participate in a public comment period of the meeting.

(7) Members of the general public otherwise participating in a meeting of a public body held electronically under this section are to be excluded from participation in a closed session of the public body held electronically during that meeting if the closed session is convened and held in compliance with the requirements of this act applicable to a closed session.

(8) At a meeting held under this section that accommodates members absent due to military duty or a medical condition, only those members absent due to military duty or a medical condition may participate remotely. Any member who is not on military duty or does not have a medical condition must be physically present at the meeting to participate.

HURON and TUSCOLA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

Phone: 989-673-8114 1309 Cleaver Road, Suite B, Caro, MI 48723-9160 Fax: 989-673-7490
Mustafa Mark Hamed, MD, MBA, MPH, Medical Director www.tchd.us Ann Hepfer, RN, BS, Health Officer

Ann Hepfer Health Officer Huron/Tuscola
For Immediate Release
March 16, 2021

Huron and Tuscola County Updates

Tuscola County reporting 155 cases last week and a weekly average positivity rate of 21 %, it was 12.9% last week, average of 149 tests daily. Huron County reporting 156 cases, 32% test positivity weekly rate, it was 21.4% last week, average of 80 tests completed daily. These are not rapid tests, they are PCR tests.

Across the State of MI there is an upward trend of positive cases. We are seeing increasing hospitalizations across the region. The good news is we are seeing less illness and cases in the ages of 65 and above. This is most likely due to vaccinations. Last week there was a definite increase in the number of cases that caused many schools to return to virtual education, we also seen more business and county departments affected by illness and quarantine. You can see school outbreaks on the states COVID19 website. This is not what we wanted to see going into spring break and Easter gatherings. Please do not let your guard down. I know you are tired, we are all very tired, wear your masks, wash your hands frequently and avoid groups and gatherings where you cannot socially distance by 6 ft. The 6ft of spacing is so important it is what separates you from those that are positive and reduces the likely hood that you will be quarantined. Please get vaccinated when it is your time. We are seeing additional cases of the B117 variant in both counties, this strain is known to be more infectious than COVID19. Currently the vaccine is showing that it is effective against this strain.

CDC Guidelines for fully vaccinated people can:

- Visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing
- Visit with unvaccinated people from a single household who are at low risk for severe COVID-19 disease indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing
- Refrain from quarantine and testing following a known exposure if asymptomatic. If you have any symptoms of COVID 19 like a runny nose, nasal congestion, cough, fever, fatigue, shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, please get tested. There are cases of breakthrough vaccine, so please do not take any of your symptoms for granted as just allergies.

(Allergies normally have puffy, itchy eyes and sneezing, COVID 19 does not normally display these additional symptoms.) No vaccine is 100 % effective, if you are vaccinated and get COVID19 the vaccine should stop you from getting serious illness and prevent hospitalization.

For now, fully vaccinated people should continue to:

- Take precautions in public like wearing a well-fitted mask and physical distancing
- Wear masks, practice physical distancing, and adhere to other prevention measures when visiting with unvaccinated people who are at increased risk for severe COVID-19 disease or who have an unvaccinated household member who is at increased risk for severe COVID-19 disease
- Wear masks, maintain physical distance, and practice other prevention measures when visiting with unvaccinated people from multiple households
- Avoid medium- and large-sized in-person gatherings
- Get tested if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
- Follow guidance issued by individual employers

CDC Guidance for traveling:

What you need to know

Travel increases your chance of spreading and getting COVID-19. Delay travel and stay home to protect yourself and others from COVID-19, **even** if you are vaccinated.

If you **must** travel, take steps to protect yourself and others:

- If you are eligible, get fully vaccinated for COVID-19.
- Before you travel, get tested with a viral test 1-3 days before your trip.
- Wear a mask over your nose and mouth when in public.
- Avoid crowds and stay at least 6 feet/2 meters (about 2 arm lengths) from anyone who did not travel with you.
- Get tested 3-5 days after your trip and stay home and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel, even if your test is negative. If you don't get tested, stay home and self-quarantine for 10 days after travel.
- Follow all state and local recommendations or requirements after travel can be found here [COVID-19 Travel Planner | CDC](#)

New Process for those testing Positive.

The Tuscola County Health Department has partnered with Michigan software developer CoherentRX to implement a tool called Patient Education Genius (PEG) for collecting information from individuals who test positive for COVID-19 through a digital survey sent via text or e-mail. The survey only asks for information that is allowable under the Public health Code and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability (HIPAA) Privacy Act, such as demographics, symptoms, occupation, attendance at public events or gatherings, and people with whom they may have been in close contact. The survey does NOT gather any private information like social security numbers, personal passwords, or banking details.

When our health department receives notification of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, the PEG system will issue a text message and/or e-mail to the individual. Filling out the online form versus a lengthy phone call from investigators will be simpler and easier for both the public and health department staff.

Vaccine Update

We are currently vaccinating people who aged 50 and up, as well as, vaccination of people aged 18 and up who have disabilities and/or medical conditions, as well as their caregiver family members and guardians. By April 5, 2021, all areas of the state may, as vaccine supplies are available, implement vaccination of all people aged 16 and up who were not previously eligible. We will have access to Pfizer vaccine to vaccinate children 16 and 17 years of age. This vaccine is being prioritized for this age group. After spring break will let you know when and how we will be vaccinating this age group, parental consent will be required.

If you are over the age of 65 and are still in need of vaccination, please call the health department to get an appointment in Huron call 989-269-9721 in Tuscola call 989-673-8114.

Regardless of the current phase of eligibility, anyone desiring to be vaccinated please register if you are a Huron County resident at www.hchd.us or a Tuscola County resident at www.tchd.us. This preregistration link is used to contact you when vaccine is available. We encourage anyone to help those who do not have internet access. When we receive vaccine, we will contact you by email (if provided), text or phone call. You will then have times to choose from in the schedule for a specific date and time. We are vaccinating at a minimum of 4 days a week for first and second doses. Please also check out your local pharmacy, Rite Aid, Walmart, Meijer, Kroger, CVS, Walgreens and hospital of additional opportunities to be vaccinated.

It is important that if you are an essential worker that you select your occupation from the

dropdown box and type in the name of the business. We have been sent the lists of the businesses that are classified as agriculture and we are reaching out to those organizations. Everyone still needs to go on the waitlist. If you are 50 and older with chronic illness **such as** diabetes types 1 and 2, cancer, chronic kidney disease, COPD, heart failure, coronary artery disease, immunocompromised state, obesity, severe obesity, sickle cell disease, smoking, asthma moderate to severe, cerebrovascular disease, cystic fibrosis, hypertension, liver disease, neurologic conditions as dementia, downs syndrome, pulmonary fibrosis. if you are not sure talk to your doctor. We do not need a doctor order.

For information on the number of residents vaccinated Go to the MI COVID 19 Vaccination Dashboard at www.michigan.gov/covidvaccine

Testing Update

UPDATE: Tuscola County Health Department: Time: 9-11am returning on Thursdays to the Tuscola County Health Department Parking lot . Testing is free, and insurances are billed. Due to vaccination efforts we have asked MDHHS for assistance with testing.

Great Lakes Bay Health Care in Bad Axe MI continue to test on M, W, F from 10-12pm. They are located at 876 N Van Dyke Rd, Bad Axe, MI 48413 Testing is free, and insurances are billed. Telephone number 989- 623-0137.

You can use the states COVID19 testing locator found at www.michigan.gov/coronavirus to find additional testing locations.

Testing clinics maybe be cancelled to inclement weather conditions.

Resources:

In need of local resources please use the 2-1-1 website: <https://www.211nemichigan.org/>

Or call them at 211

Huron County resource guide:

https://www.greatstarthuron.com/uploads/4/5/4/4/4544565/huron_community_resources_during_covid-19.pdf

Updated: Tuscola Community resource guide: <http://www.greatstartuscola.org/wp-content/uploads/Great-Start-Resource-Brochure-2021.pdf>

Most Popular

- 1.** COVID bringing national attention to Upper Thumb
- 2.** Thumb Industries moving into former McDonald's Food and Family location
- 3.** Bad Axe man arrested for trafficking heroin
- 4.** Mor Sco

NEWS

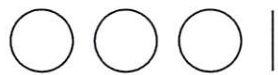
COVID bringing national attention to Upper Thumb

Trends put Upper Thumb on 'hot spot' map



Scott Nunn, scott.nunn@hearstnp.com

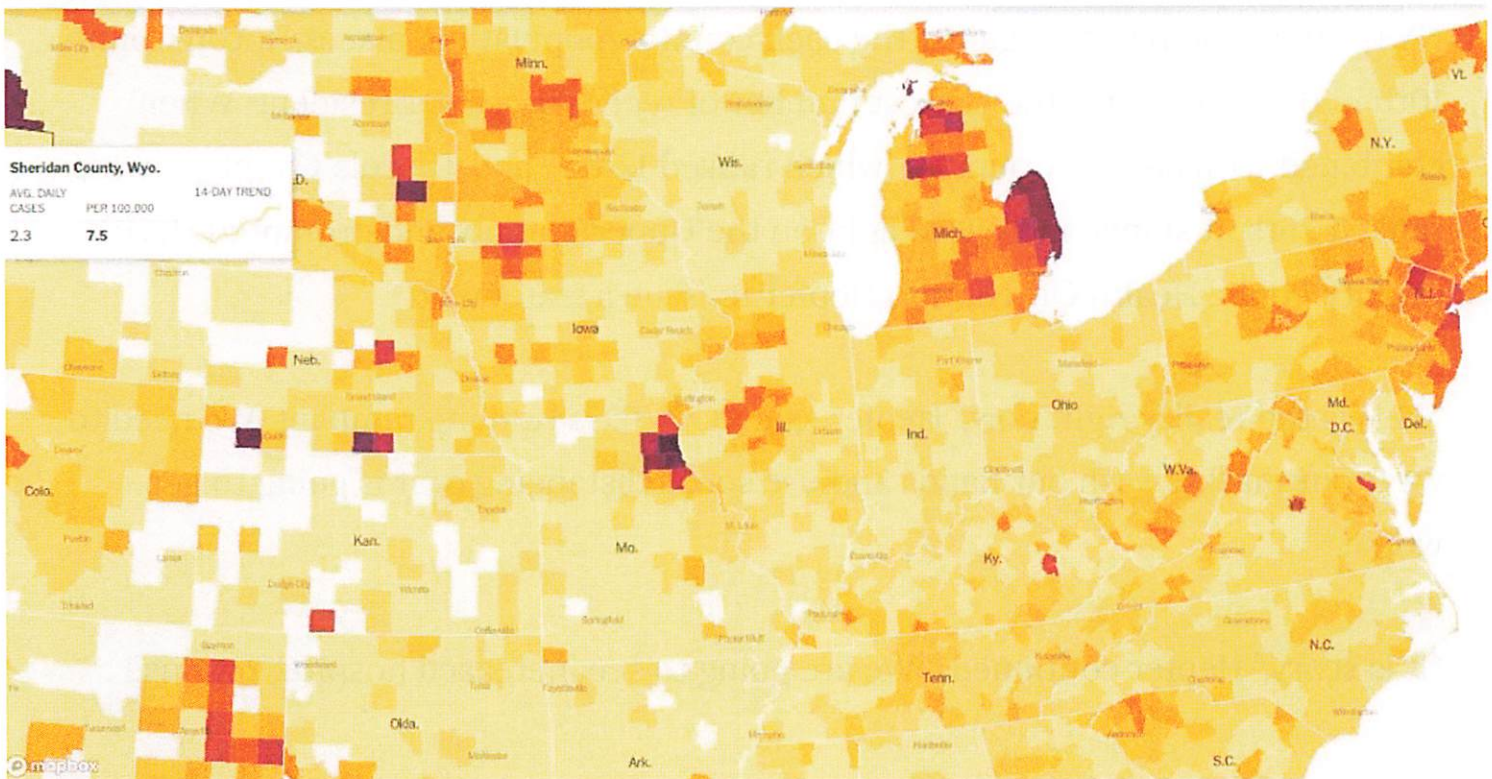
Updated: March 29, 2021 5:24 p.m.



ADVERTISEMENT FOR COVID-19 CASES BY ZIP



Next Up: Thumb Industries moving into former McDonald's Food...



Sources: State and local health agencies. Population and demographic data from Census Bureau. [About this data](#)

A map published by the New York Times shows the Upper Thumb is a "hot spot" for the coronavirus. (New York Times/Screenshot)

Despite continued vaccination efforts and a sense of hope due to the relaxed restrictions in the state, recent data published by the New York Times put the Upper Thumb in a national spotlight for its recent coronavirus trends.

According to state data, after more than a week of sharp increases, Huron County had accumulated 2,127 confirmed coronavirus cases March 27, an increase of 227 cases from the week prior.

This trend is similar across the entire Upper Thumb region, which in seven days saw a collective increase of 695 confirmed cases.

While the increase might not seem like much to some people, data published by the NYT, which compares it against the each county's population, places Huron County 10th in the country for the highest number of recent cases per resident. When combined with Sanilac County — which ranked 12th — and Tuscola County — which ranked 26th, it shined increased light on the Upper Thumb, and prompted Huron County Public Health Officer Ann Hepfer to issue a statement.

"This is the reality right now," Hepfer said. "COVID is running rampant. We need to wear our masks, wash our hands and use social distancing or it is going to get worse."

"It is scary," Hepfer continued. "We are going to see increased hospitalizations."

Hepfer said this type of attention isn't beneficial to the Upper Thumb.

"Who wants to make the national headlines like this?" Hepfer asked. "It should not be like this. It's a direct result of people not following the guidelines."

According to state data, the Upper Thumb saw a two day increase of 162 confirmed cases, or 81 cases per day March 29. The data showed an increase of 39 cases in Huron County, 60 cases in Tuscola County and 63 cases in Sanilac County.

The Times' data shows Michigan is ranked third in the country among states "Where new cases are higher and staying high." The information is based on states where new cases had a daily average of at least 15 new cases per 100,000 people over the last seven days. According to the NYT, over the past week Michigan saw an average of 4,605 new cases per day, which was an increase of 133% from the two weeks prior.

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Huron County saw a daily average increase of 39 cases in the last week, which is significantly lower than Wayne County's 796 average per day. However, on a per capita basis, Huron County led the state in the most new cases per 100,000 people with 127. Huron was followed by St. Clair County at 106 and Sanilac County at 105. Comparatively, Wayne County, with its 1.75 million people, had 46 cases per 100,000 people.

Statewide there was a test positivity rate of 15.6% March 28. Locally the numbers were even higher with a 45.9% in Huron County, 26% in Tuscola County and 32% in Sanilac County.

According to the NYT, test positivity because rates are so high, it suggests the cases are being significantly undercounted, which should prompt extra concern for residents in the region.

According to Hepfer, coronavirus-positive hospitalization rates have remained relatively low among older age groups, which she attributes to the vaccination. Hepfer said that although the vaccination doesn't always prevent someone from contracting COVID, it does help with the severity of the symptoms if they get the disease.

The health department is vaccinating people age 50 and over, as well as at-risk individuals over the age of 18. According to Hepfer, by April 5 all areas of the state may vaccinate people over the age of 16, if the vaccination supplies allow it.

Hepfer said if someone is interested in being vaccinated, but hasn't already registered, they should visit www.hchd.us or call 989-269-9721. According to Hepfer, people should also contact their local pharmacy, Rite Aid, Walmart, Meijer, Kroger, CVS, Walgreens and their local hospital to register.



Written By
Scott Nunn

Reach Scott on

Scott Nunn has been the assistant editor of the Huron Daily Tribune since October 2019.

Scott became a journalist a little later in life than many. Before joining the Tribune, Scott was the associate editor at Sunrise Printing & Publishing, where he worked with Eric Young in overseeing three weekly publications in Northern Michigan.

Prior to becoming a journalist, he was in graphic design, advertising sales, wholesale lumber and was even a pizza and short order cook. While he attended college for a couple stints, Scott attributes most of the skills he has acquired to his thirst for knowledge, excellent family and a history of wonderful mentors.

Scott is a self-described lover of food, YouTube junkie, proud handyman and a bit of a class clown.

Scott and his wife Shannon have four kids, two dogs and a cat.

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