

Charlotte County update for 3/18/20

## **Charlotte acts to prevent spread of virus, raise awareness**

By Hector Flores, Charlotte County Administrator

As the coronavirus situation continues to evolve, Charlotte County's highest priority is to ensure the safety and well-being of the public and our employees.

As of Wednesday, Charlotte County has had one person test positive for the new coronavirus. The individual is isolated and recovering, according to the Department of Health. There are no new suspected cases.

The County Commission on Tuesday declared a state of local emergency that streamlines procurement and decision-making. The declaration enables us to speed up purchasing needed supplies, contract for services and perform other duties to ensure public safety. On Monday, we raised the Emergency Operation Center's status to Level 2 and activated a joint information center with other local government agencies. The EOC is working with the Department of Health and the state Division of Emergency Management to coordinate response and communication.

Following new CDC guidance on mass gatherings, all county libraries, recreation centers and pools were closed Tuesday until April 12 pending further review. Closures of or restricted access to additional facilities may follow based on the evolving situation.

To provide a central source of all local, state and national information, the county launched a coronavirus information page on the county website, [CharlotteCountyFL.gov](http://CharlotteCountyFL.gov). The page includes a list of closures countywide, rumor control, online services and links to other local government agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and the Department of Health.

We encourage residents and business to take advantage of online county services to limit face-to-face interactions in our customer service areas. Our Human Services and Community Services departments are working to address growing community needs. The 2-1-1 call center is open to answer questions and direct clients to available resources. For the hearing impaired and people in Englewood, call 941-205-2161. For coronavirus information, call 866-719-6121.

I want to emphasize the CDC guidance people should heed to prevent infection and reduce of risk of spreading the virus:

- Wash your hands regularly or use hand sanitizer
- If you are sick, stay home
- Avoid contact with others as much as possible if you are:
  - Elderly
  - Having serious health problems
- Practice social distancing in public and at work
- Avoid gatherings of 10 or more people
- Avoid unnecessary travel

Charlotte County will continue to provide core functions and services with full staffing based on the circumstances we face. I am confident our staff and community partners are fully prepared to address the current situation and capable of adapting to any changes. I wish everyone good health and peace of mind. Take care of each other and wash your hands.

*Hector Flores is the Charlotte County administrator. Readers may reach him at [Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov](mailto:Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov).*