

Friends and neighbors of Swain County. I want to reiterate some things you know and to assure you that things are being done to protect you. The Swain County Commissioners are as troubled, as you, regarding the problems we face under the State of Emergency issued by the Federal and State governments. The Covid-19 (coronavirus) is something no one has ever seen before.

We are moving cautiously in our efforts to protect Swain County citizens. Perhaps, too cautiously for some people. But we want our decisions to be as fair to all citizens as possible. I want to express my thanks to all who have contacted me and expressed concerns. If things were as easy and simple as some believe the issues would have already been resolved. There are too many "holes" in the wall of protection to say stopping traffic at our borders will stop the Covid-19 from entering our County. As hard as that statement is to accept, it is the truth. This is why this virus is a worldwide pandemic and on the rise in all 50 states.

Let me say to the "most vulnerable" people, those over age 60 and those who have compromised immune systems, I am one of you. For my health, and that of my wife, we are trying to follow all of the guidelines issued by the Center for Disease Control. I encourage you to do the same. Each Commissioner has family in Swain County and none wants to see them sick.

Many of the supplies needed by our health providers are not available. North Carolina, as are all states, is begging the Federal Government for the supplies we need to test and treat patients infected by this virus. The push by the national and state health systems that if you're sick don't go to the hospital but stay home, seems cruel and inhumane. And it possibly is, but as long as supplies are not available, or protective gear for medical personnel, it's the best advice for not infecting others and spreading the virus. I believe a vaccine will be discovered soon.

Our Health Department and our Department of Emergency Management are doing their best to stay ahead of this virus and to keep you informed of the steps of caution and precaution you can take. Newspapers, newscasts, and many other sources are taking steps to inform the public of ways you can keep yourself and your family safe. I have seen such information on pamphlets provided by Duke Power, Ingles Grocery Stores, the Senior Center, and the County Schools. I am extremely pleased that students who need food during this time of uncertainty are receiving it through the resources of the School System. We don't know how long this threat will last, but I believe we will have to visit our plans of action many more times in the future.

This is supposed to be a bulletin of hope and promise so all the news is not bad. We are a resilient people. We have long made do with what's available. Self-quarantine, although not a new thing in the mountains, is not acceptable when we feel it is not decided by the self. But, at this point it is one of the most effective tools against Covid-19. We are fortunate to have the cell phone to help us keep in touch with other.

"This too shall pass!" Together we will survive this crisis and assign it to its proper historical memory. You, the people, placed your trust in my abilities to make hard but necessary decisions. I make those decisions with you in mind. This current situation is no different. You are always at the forefront of my mind. Help each other. Call neighbors, family, and friends to see if they need any assistance you can provide. If they need more than you provide, give a Commissioner, or me a call. Thank you for reading this. More posts will follow. Please see our County Webpage for future posts. If you do not have availability to check online, call Cindi Woodard at: 828- 488-9273 ext. 2225) for a copy, or me any comments my phone number: 828-736-1876. Thank you for reading this post. Ben Bushyhead, Chair, Swain County Commissioners.