

Assessors | Auditors | Clerks | Coroners | Prosecutors | Sheriffs | Treasurers

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** June 23, 2020

**TO:** General

**FROM:** Washington Association of County Officials Staff

**SUBJECT:** COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS CALL

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### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

On June 23, 2020 WACO hosted a teleconference to discuss continuity of operations in county courthouses amid the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The following is a synthesis of the information discussed and shared.

#### **WACO General Update**

- Roll call of call participants
  - 25 participants

#### **Topics of Interest/General Discussion**

- Coroners
  - CARES act funding discussions helping identify reimbursement expenses related to Covid-19 and indigent burials through October 31 (December 30 for direct allocation counties).
  - Working with WACO Leg staff to discuss being added to emergency management council board 38.52.040 and considered first responders (38.52).
- Treasurers
  - There is a need for Treasurers to share bankruptcy information with smaller counties on how to share.
  - Counties figuring out how to do online auctions in lieu of public/physical auction.
- General
  - Discussed PPEs and dividers/plexiglass and other infrastructure challenges.

Assessors | Auditors | Clerks | Coroners | Prosecutors | Sheriffs | Treasurers

- Discussed issue of furloughs and impacts on offices.
  - Possible federal funds administered by Employment Security through July for individual claims.
    - Some issues with unions and whether health care is covered under furlough.
- Discussed how to keep logs for contact tracing
  - Some counties have experienced friction on how to meet the need.

#### **Preliminary Legislative Opportunities Outlined**

- Assessors – providing definition of “physical inspection” that accommodates social distancing and meets IAAO standards
- Auditors – allow remote verification on current in-person filing requirements; allow definition of auditor’s office to be other locations designated by the Auditor.
- Clerks – providing definition of “presence” of Clerks at court proceedings to include virtual presence
- Coroners – be added to emergency management council board 38.52.040 and considered first responders (38.52).



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** **June 16, 2020**

**TO:** General Distribution

**FROM:** Timothy Grisham, Deputy Director  
Washington Association of County Officials

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS DISCUSSION**

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### **Background and Summary:**

On June 16, 2020 WACO hosted a teleconference to discuss continuity of operations in county courthouses amid the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The following is a synthesis of the information discussed and shared. It has been determined that the next call will occur in one week's time on Tuesday, June 23, 2020 at 2 p.m.

### **WACO General Update**

- Roll call of call participants
  - 9 participants

### **Preliminary Legislative Opportunities Discussion**

- Coroners – be added to emergency management council board 38.52.040 and considered first responders (38.52).
- Assessors – providing definition of “physical inspection” that accommodates social distancing and meets IAAO standards
- Clerks – providing definition of “presence” of Clerks at court proceedings to include virtual presence
- Auditors – allow remote verification on current in-person filing requirements; allow definition of auditor’s office to be other locations designated by the Auditor.



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** **June 9, 2020**

**TO:** General Distribution

**FROM:** Timothy Grisham, Deputy Director  
Washington Association of County Officials

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS DISCUSSION**

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### **Background and Summary:**

On June 9, 2020 WACO hosted a teleconference to discuss continuity of operations in county courthouses amid the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The following is a synthesis of the information discussed and shared. It has been determined that the next call will occur in one week's time on Tuesday, June 16, 2020 at 2 p.m.

### **WACO General Update**

- Roll call of call participants
  - 30 participants

### **Preliminary Survey Recap**

- 65% of respondents indicated their county's' continuity of operations plans do not account for pandemics or long-term remote work situations.
- 74% of counties identify a lack of adequate PPEs to conduct business for up to 3 months.
- Many remarked they lack the technology infrastructure to enable remote operations – we didn't ask that as a quantitative data point, but can probably produce from comments...
- Some counties are unable to maintain social distancing and their operations within current county courthouse spaces – we didn't ask that as a quantitative data point, but can probably produce from comments...
- Coroners counted among first responders. Equal access to PPE; equity in health and safety provisions and leave and overtime considerations.
- Reduce in-person requirements on transactions.
  - Auditors – Physical inspection of ballot process
  - Auditors – 29A.08 “in person” transactions
  - Auditors – E-Recording
  - Clerks – Juror selection/Juror Rooms

- Greater flexibility is needed related to the locale where services are provided outside of traditional courthouse offices.
  - Define “attendance” relative to court proceedings to allow for remote access RCW 2.32.050
- Increase IT infrastructure, particularly for rural communities

### **Questions and General Conversation**

- How many counties used CARES money for infrastructure?
- What is the interplay between infrastructure needs and regulatory or legal requirements for conducting business in person?
  - Employee levels defined by how to get the job done
    - How to get the job done defined by constitution, statute, rules, and policies.
      - What can you control and change?
    - Staffing often follows region’s population as statute typically references the elected official.
- Pierce County considering renting non-county owned buildings for public meetings and courts.
- Counties would not be in favor of legislature sweeping funding in a special or subsequent regular session.
- Desire to explore equity in online access between rural and urban counties.
  - WSAC conversations mirror WACO.
  - Past pushback from some utilities.
  - What entity would provide service – not all counties have a PUD.
    - Public vs Private providers.



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** **June 2, 2020**

**TO:** General Distribution

**FROM:** Timothy Grisham, Deputy Director  
Washington Association of County Officials

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS DISCUSSION**

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### **Background and Summary:**

On June 2, 2020 WACO hosted a teleconference to discuss continuity of operations in county courthouses amid the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The following is a synthesis of the information discussed and shared. It has been determined that the next call will occur in one week's time on Tuesday, June 9, 2020 at 2 p.m.

### **WACO General Update**

- Roll call of call participants
  - 29 participants

### **Trending Issues and Open Discussion**

- Some counties experiencing large sales tax revenue losses leading to immediate budget cuts for the remaining budget year.
  - Major impacts for counties with even the 4-5% cuts.
- Discussed DOR deferment on sales tax and potential to predict when the “bottom” of the returns will be apparent.
  - Discussed delinquent tax collection cycle from past recession.
  - Thurston County reporting 3% higher sales tax collection than this time last year.
- Timber, lodging, and Gas taxes all down.
- CARES act grants available for individual offices.
  - Kittitas County Auditor office created department request process and reporting system.
  - Thurston County Assessor applied for 2 grants for aerial imagery laptops and remote software. Reduce exposure (Covid)
  - Spokane County Clerk applied for e-filing. Reduce exposure (Covid)
- Some courts are beginning to handle cases more rapidly than others.
  - Some courts considering potential Jury trials in July.
  - Clark County working on mask policy
  - Spokane running courts at half capacity.
    - Using staff to do “traffic control”.

- Discussed planning for an office outbreak.
  - CDC Guidance
    - Person infected quarantined, currently do not need to have office quarantined.
  - Contact Tracing
- Discussed restroom usage.
- Discussed changing physical space to allow social distancing.
  - Moving/removing furniture
- Discussed how to serve those who cannot be served remotely, or what barriers social distancing is creating.
  - Elderly with no computer/cell phone
  - Unbankable individuals (no bank/credit cards)
  - Title company issues
- Concern in public health, medicolegal profession about Covid spike due to lax social distancing, and increased mass public gatherings.
  - Gathering supplies in preparation.



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** **May 26, 2020**

**TO:** General Distribution

**FROM:** Timothy Grisham, Deputy Director  
Washington Association of County Officials

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS DISCUSSION**

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### **Background and Summary:**

On May 26, 2020 WACO hosted a teleconference to discuss continuity of operations in county courthouses amid the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The following is a synthesis of the information discussed and shared. It has been determined that the next call will occur in one week's time on Tuesday, June 2, 2020 at 2 p.m.

### **WACO General Update**

- Roll call of call participants
  - 31 participants

### **Affiliate General Update**

- Assessors
  - Discussed prioritization in regard to funding shortage.
    - Personal property may be the first place that would potentially be cut.
      - Most difficult to administer for amount of tax collected.
      - Potentially cause a shift from commercial to residential.
    - Discontinue physical re-valuation notices being sent and put online.
- Auditors
  - Thurston County to offer drive through voter registration at South Sound Community College.
  - Discussed need for elections funding passed by past legislative session.
- Treasurers
  - Discussed merits of elected County Treasurer vs one that reports to a County Commission/Council.

### **Trending Issues and Open Discussion**

- Discussed the difference between current economic situation and great recession.
- Discussion on future funding of county services.
  - Concerns from counties for unfunded mandates/workload increases out of a session in guise of potential budget cuts.

- Discussed sweeps of dedicated funds.
  - Discussed opening up funding authority.
- Physical space issues for courts, elections centers, and other services will be an issue that needs to be addressed when considering social distancing.
  - Staggered staffing for social distancing.
  - How to navigate narrow halls.
- Protections for community members interacting with the courthouse.
  - Jurors as “temporary county employees”, and county need to provide protection/masks.
- Discussed community access during phase 2.
  - Counties in phase 2 planning for more robust opening as it moves to phase 3.
  - Creating facility infrastructure to facilitate social distancing requirements.
  - Counties open experience it easier from a working perspective.
- Some counties doing small budget cuts now – with exercises in larger budget cutting.
  - Some counties cuts are for remaining budget.
  - Some counties cut exercises are for future budgets.
- Some counties freezing or eliminated vacant positions.
- Destination sales tax big help (streamlined sales tax) to cover the deficit in local sales tax collection.



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** **May 19, 2020**

**TO:** General Distribution

**FROM:** Timothy Grisham, Deputy Director  
Washington Association of County Officials

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS DISCUSSION**

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### **Background and Summary:**

On May 19, 2020 WACO hosted a teleconference to discuss continuity of operations in county courthouses amid the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The following is a synthesis of the information discussed and shared. It has been determined that the next call will occur in one week's time on Tuesday, May 26, 2020 at 2 p.m.

### **WACO General Update**

- Roll call of call participants
  - 19 participants

### **Affiliate General Update**

- Assessors
  - Some counties deliberating on how to move forward with Phase 2 applications with planning. As other counties apply, some counties operate differently – which has caused some confusion.
  - Governor guidance for construction for Phase 1 is changed in Phase 2. Example is visitor log. This impacts appraisers – what obligations do appraisers have for Phase 1 (log), or Phase 2 (no log language).
- Clerks
  - Some counties are opening offices for limited timeframes.
  - Discussed garnishment waiver/filing. Counties still need to calculate if/any fiscal impacts.
- Coroners
  - Pushing to make medico-legal investigators designated as a first responder.
  - Staffing shortage in entire field.
  - Lack of PPEs in many counties. Allotments go to first responders prior to other government agencies.
  - Indigent remains are on the rise (unclaimed bodies). State stopped paying for indigent burials in the 1980s.
- Treasurers

- CARES grant funds must be used for expenses directly related to COVID-19, but cannot supplant or back bill.
  - Guidelines is set by budget as of March 2020.

### **Trending Issues and Open Discussion**

- Some counties bringing staff back to the office.
- Budget cuts and staffing in regard to union contracting.
  - Any changes in staffing hours that effects pay will have to be a union negotiation if a contract is in place.
  - Concerns that cuts would be permanent – even after recovery much like the recession.
- As we move to Phase 2/3 essential services will have more restrictions on how to operate not less.



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** **May 12, 2020**

**TO:** General Distribution

**FROM:** Jennifer Wallace, Executive Director  
Washington Association of County Officials

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS DISCUSSION**

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### **Background and Summary:**

On May 12, 2020 WACO hosted a teleconference to discuss continuity of operations in county courthouses amid the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The following is a synthesis of the information discussed and shared. It has been determined that the next call will occur in one week's time on Tuesday, May 19, 2020 at 2 p.m.

### **WACO General Update**

- Roll call of call participants
  - 25 participants

### **Affiliate General Update**

- Auditors
  - Adams County Commissioners – Not planning to reopen at original May date; trying to address infrastructure challenges including plexiglass shortage making it difficult to install shields.
  - Emergency operation centers may be a resource for plexiglass
  - Thurston County has purchase 2 masks / employee; altering traffic flow in building – “one way”; added staggering work hours between the Assessor and Auditor offices
  - Some counties working on drive-through voter registration / ballot replacement
  - Trying to figure out ballot processing with social distancing
  - How implement the new requirement for university voting centers and maintain social distancing?
- Assessors
  - King County will approach legislature in special session to re-value properties rather than using pre-COVID values. Question raised as to why a county would request this when the impact on loss of property tax will only felt at state level (rate-based)
  - Most Assessors prefer to wait to have impact on values in January 2021; will be difficult to re-value.

- Loss of sales tax revenue resulting in counties starting to plan cuts and layoffs.
- Clerks
  - Waiting to hear about renewal of protection order proclamation.
  - Jury trials postponed until July 6<sup>th</sup>. Still working on / trying to figure out how to safely conduct.
  - Adaptations counties are implementing:
    - Some hold telephonic proceedings; purchasing video
    - Using online dropbox to deliver evidence
    - Livestreaming proceedings
- Coroners
  - No updates or questions this week
- Prosecutors
  - Awaiting extension on protection orders – difficulty reaching 4-corners agreement.
  - Seeing an increase in number of fake unemployment claims
- Sheriffs
  - No sheriffs participated
- Treasurers
  - Collections are stronger than expected; fewer people taking advantage of extensions than expected.
  - Because shut down was right before deadline, second half collections might be affected more.
  - Would homeowners taking advantage of forbearance lead to loss of property tax revenue? Unlikely – mortgage companies will pay
  - Thurston County – strategizing re-opening middle of June.

### **Trending Issues and Open Discussion**

- Outbreak at meat packing plant in Kittitas / Yakima – trying to figure out alternate housing to quarantine potentially contagious workers. Many are migrant workers housed in mobile homes – risky for spread.
- Masks enough? New research study suggests virus can enter through eyes; droplets collect on eyelashes and enter eyes.
- Legislature likely to hold special session in August – focused primarily on anticipated \$3.8 Billion budget shortfall.
- Annual reporting date only extended to May 31<sup>st</sup> because Governor only extending in 30-day increments. While understand the rationale, it makes it difficult because counties have to go ahead and plan / be ready to submit May 31<sup>st</sup> in case there's not an extension.



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** **May 5, 2020**

**TO:** General Distribution

**FROM:** Timothy Grisham, Deputy Director  
Washington Association of County Officials

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS DISCUSSION**

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### **Background and Summary:**

On May 5, 2020 WACO hosted a teleconference to discuss continuity of operations in county courthouses amid the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The following is a synthesis of the information discussed and shared. It has been determined that the next call will occur in one week's time on Tuesday, May 12, 2020 at 2 p.m.

### **WACO General Update**

- Roll call of call participants
  - 28 participants

### **Affiliate General Update**

- Auditors
  - Auditors conference cancelled and moved to virtual.
  - Elections conference moving to virtual.
    - Considerations are being given to how to implement the learning credits required by law using a virtual platform.
  - Election certification meetings subject to OPMA, looking into the legal standing of the OPMA extension.
    - 10 counties have elections that must be certified by Friday, May 8, 2020.
- Clerks
  - Cancelled summer conference and rebooked for 2021.
- Coroners
  - Covid-19 outbreak has highlighted the lack of staffing for many coroner offices.
    - Impact of lack of staffing creates a lack of ability to appropriately respond to deaths during pandemic if staff is sick/infected or cut due to funding.
- Prosecutors
  - Looking into receiving guidance for the ten counties provided ability to apply for a variance to move to phase 2 of the Governor's re-opening of operations plan.

- Prosecutors looking into whether the legislature has legal authority to suspend certain RCWs and WACs after 30-day Governor suspension expires. This is particular to Proclamation 20-28 regarding OPMA.
- Prosecutors reviewing regulation of social distancing, practices, etc. by the public entering public facilities.
- Treasurers
  - Conference (June) cancelled.
  - July legislative conference currently still scheduled.
  - Remote regional meetings.
  - Some counties encouraged by tax payments received thus far.

### **Trending Issues and Open Discussion**

- Preparing for a possible special session.
- Masks and other measures as requirement to return to office.
- Fiscal impact of cuts or shortfalls on counties providing statutory mandated services.
  - Proper appraisals. Appeals take more time/resources.
  - Many offices never returned to pre-recession staffing levels and additional cuts will impact ability to carry out mandated services.



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** **April 28, 2020**

**TO:** General Distribution

**FROM:** Timothy Grisham, Deputy Director  
Washington Association of County Officials

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS DISCUSSION**

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### **Background and Summary:**

On April 21, 2020 WACO hosted a teleconference to discuss continuity of operations in county courthouses amid the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The following is a synthesis of the information discussed and shared. It has been determined that the next call will occur in one week's time on Tuesday, May 5, 2020 at 2 p.m.

### **WACO General Update**

- Roll call of call participants
  - 36 participants

### **Affiliate General Update**

- Assessors
  - Some counties shifting mailing dates.
  - Appraising in the community.
    - PPE needs for appraisers.
    - No carpools
    - Keep social distance from community members.
    - No indoor measurements during outbreak. Measure footprint to compare plans.
  - Taxation is an impact on county funds. Resources to properly appraise is important.
- Auditors
  - Looking through contingency planning for elections.
  - Managing messaging for drop boxes – if counties are using ballot boxes for other purposes during Covid-19.
  - Discussed using CARES money to invest in e-recording.
- Clerks
  - Heavier docket days with less employees to cover.
  - There may be a need for alternative locations for social distancing needs regarding jury trials.

- Coroners
  - Request to provide coroner and staff the same provisions for pay, leave, etc. as first responder is going to the Federal Government. Would like to look at for state designation if special session occurs.
  - Indigent burials are on the rise. Cost passed onto counties.
- Prosecutors
  - Exploring ways to accomodate juries and participant using social distancing.
    - Shift court room around
    - Change locations
  - Court ruled on prison litigation in favor of counties/state (for the most part). However, DOC will release some offenders.
- Treasurers
  - April 30 is property tax due date. Counties will know greater implications of fiscal impact in approximately one week.

### **Trending Issues and Open Discussion**

- CARES funding, limitations, and amounts.
  - Some agreements sent.
  - Governor sending information from Commerce in coming week(s).
  - Need for commissioners to share information as it arrives with elected and department heads to begin planning.
- Facility and space needs for adequate social distancing after “stay at home” lifted.
- Need funds to allow better telecommunication needs – especially rural counties.
  - Laptops
  - VPN capability
  - Printers for home use
  - Increased internet connections/capacity
- How can you fill a jury if people are unwilling to leave quarantine?
- Contingency planning if a member of your staff gets sick, check CDC guidelines and develop a county specific plan.
  - Actions you take determine what scenario you follow.
  - Good idea to retain decontamination company for emergency needs.
  - Create step up plan for re-opening using phases. Detailing each phase's needs and actions.
- Using tools such as drones, etc. to reduce contact.
- Need for a centralized source for PPE acquisition.
- Some counties implement hiring freeze, and are conducting budget cut exercises.
- Safe mail handling training is needed in regard to Covid-19 drop boxes.
- State early retirement program to alleviate budget on counties, as well as reduce harm for high risk individuals.
- How to deal with community members who insist on doing dealings in person.
  - How to reduce anger in community.
  - How to better communicate alternative methods of doing business.



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** **April 21, 2020**

**TO:** General Distribution

**FROM:** Timothy Grisham, Deputy Director  
Washington Association of County Officials

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS DISCUSSION**

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### **Background and Summary:**

On April 21, 2020 WACO hosted a teleconference to discuss continuity of operations in county courthouses amid the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The following is a synthesis of the information discussed and shared. It has been determined that the next call will occur in one week's time on Tuesday, April 27, 2020 at 2 p.m.

### **WACO General Update**

- Roll call of call participants
  - 33 participants

### **Affiliate General Update**

- Assessors
  - Assessors are looking into issues that may occur with a potential extension of the stay at home order.
  - Not hearing any language changes or deadline leniency from DOR as of yet.
  - When courthouses reopen – how to plan in advance to regulate public exposure.
    - Discussed physical preparation such as plexiglass barriers, air flow modification.
    - Discussed staggering staffing shifts in office to allow for social distancing.
    - Discussed shared areas such as restrooms. How to keep clean, how to limit usage.
      - Increased the number of cleanings per day.
      - Non-common area cleaning area/supplies.
  - Appeals process/dialog is an ongoing challenge to address remotely.
- Auditors
  - Auditors currently receiving grant agreements from SOS for CARES Act.
    - Exploring how to place funds, track, and invest in regard to requirements.
  - Funding to increase election security to maintain a level of separation/distancing.
  - Encourage use of exterior drop boxes.
  - Monitors in lobby of elections center for viewing.

- Prosecutors
  - Hopeful for some opening up of stay-at-home due to restlessness of individuals both in the community and other elected officials. This creates potential legal issues and potential challenges.
  - Every Governor proclamation requires a review by prosecutor office to interpret. Lack of clarity creates not only issues for prosecutor office but issues with commissioners, health officers, and first responders.
- Sheriff
  - Extension would be difficult on law enforcement. Stay-at-home order enforcement is difficult, residents becoming impatient.
  - Some local courts waiting to see what is next.
  - Limited patrol contact and bookings.
  - Ensure that all counties have access to PPEs. That a county emergency stock be created.
  - Adequate funding for emergency response staffing needs for Sheriff, Coroner, and other first responders.
- Treasurers
  - Many have extended property tax deadlines, or offer payment plans.
    - Many counties have received a majority of mortgage payments.
  - Some counties with a smaller percentage of funds coming from mortgage plans have received requests for payment plans – but at a lower rate than previous expected for some counties.
  - Some counties still waiting for payments from mortgage companies.
  - Some expectation of increased extension requests after delinquency statements mailed.
  - Mailing thank you messaging to payors paying full year, and helpful info for second half due dates.

### Trending Issues and Open Discussion

- Discussed continuity of operations plans if office is contaminated, what to do if a staff member is infected with the virus.
  - Some offices have a continuity of operations plan for disaster that is being applied to the Covid-19 crisis.
    - Hire cleaning crew to clean entire facility.
      - No person in office for two days for cleaning process.
    - Remove sick individual from daily duties and self-quarantined for 14 days.
    - Others who may have been exposed placed on self-quarantine leave for 14 days.
- Discussed possible exposure as an elected official – own self-quarantine and after care.
- Discussed the need to establish an incident and emergency response command center for each county.
- Make sure safety equipment is not beyond expiration date.



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** **April 14, 2020**

**TO:** General Distribution

**FROM:** Timothy Grisham, Deputy Director  
Washington Association of County Officials

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS DISCUSSION**

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### **Background and Summary:**

On April 14, 2020 WACO hosted a teleconference to discuss continuity of operations in county courthouses amid the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The following is a synthesis of the information discussed and shared. It has been determined that the next call will occur in one week's time on Tuesday, April 21, 2020 at 2 p.m.

### **WACO General Update**

- Roll call of call participants
  - 26 participants

### **Affiliate General Update**

- Assessors
  - Assessors discuss what can be done without statutory changes.
    - Statutory changes would require special legislative session.
  - Discussed field work and essential workers. Many are not approaching homes and working out of car – no personal contact with homeowners.
- Auditors
  - Nationally vote by mail becoming a partisan issue. Washington State has safe, accurate vote by mail system.
    - Criticism of vote by mail is politically motivated and not factual.
  - A number of DOL decisions regarding licensing and penalties are forthcoming, including waivers – including waivers for doctor visit to obtain disabled placards.
  - Counties are entering budgeting phase. Some are looking at 2008/09 budgets to see what occurred and project such for 2020/21.
  - Auditors discussing election issues. Processing, registration, access, etc. Conversation continues.
  - Waiting for CARES Act guidelines and parameter to create spending plans.
  - Separate out spending for items that may be personal protection to avoid billing for elections, which may create double dipping on Covid related spending.
- Clerks

- Discussed concern that Governors proclamation on protection orders would mandate accepting email filing. Finished proclamation did not.
  - Urge petitioners to file/work with advocacy groups to assist.
  - Messaging expected this week.
- Coroners
  - Urging Department of Health to get antibody test used in places such as Colorado for Covid 19 to more quickly identify infected deceased within minutes rather than days. This would eliminate number of people potentially handling infected remains.
    - Could be used to determine those who were once infected, now no longer infected and have active antibodies for return to work coverage.
- Prosecutors
  - Continued push for prison/detention release.
    - Litigation is taking place.
    - Possible Governor action.
  - 8 confirmed COVID cases in Monroe Correction Center
  - Seeking clarity from Governor on exemptions on stay at home orders.
  - Seeking clarity from Governor on hybrid employees.
  - Discussed Governors proclamation on protection orders. Prosecutors are still reviewing the proclamation and determining how to work with the proclamation.
- Treasurers
  - Some counties offering payment plans for property tax.
  - Some counties offered extending due date for property tax.
  - WSACT will have conversations about October due dates (impacts mortgage company payments).
  - Discussed need for better data on a statewide level to make better decisions on tax deadline extension and payments/reduction of fines.

## Open Discussion

- Discussed prep for legislative sessions.
- Identify operation needs when faced with pandemic/mass emergency.
- Identify policy decisions that should be in statute that are only being addressed by proclamation currently.
  - Continuity of operations package in legislation with enumerated triggers for enactment.



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** **April 7, 2020**

**TO:** General Distribution

**FROM:** Timothy Grisham, Deputy Director  
Washington Association of County Officials

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS DISCUSSION**

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### **Background and Summary:**

On April 7, 2020 WACO hosted a teleconference to discuss continuity of operations in county courthouses amid the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The following is a synthesis of the information discussed and shared. It has been determined that the next call will occur in one week's time on Tuesday, April 14, 2020 at 2 p.m.

### **WACO General Update**

- Roll call of call participants
  - 32 participants

### **Affiliate General Update**

- Assessors
  - No indication of assessment deadline shift from DOR or Governor.
  - Discussing extending the date for sending out revaluation notices by a month to allow for more time to assess trend for value.
  - Assessors have ability to adjust ratio – county (local control) decision, best made county by county.
- Auditors
  - Live streaming of election workers for ballot processing ought to be negotiated through appropriate union, and ensure you address workers who may be on address confidentiality program.
  - Governor will not suspend the 18-day voter registration window for in person voter registration.
    - Discussed calling ahead to schedule meeting – tabling outside of building/or lobby.
    - Using ballot box drop box, forms available out of office building.
      - If sharing drop box with other offices, only elections staff will check box during election window.
  - Working on planning general election and August primary under same set of “stay home” social distancing restrictions.

- Coroners
  - Some counties are experiencing shortage of supplies.
  - Conducting weekly calls with DOH.
  - Issue for length of body storage due to indigent remains and funeral homes filling up being addressed by DOH, DOL, AG, SBOH, and County Coroners.
- Clerks
  - Dockets reduced in nearly all counties. Some counties staff taking advantage of federal leave (funding) program.
- Prosecutors
  - Civil side of prosecutor offices busy with reviewing proclamations, orders, and contracts due to Covid-19.
  - Criminal side working through legal challenges to release prisoners in various arenas.
- Treasurers
  - More counties may offer waiving interest and penalties.
    - Counties who enact this is having payor “ask” for the waiver – not automatic.

### **Open Discussion**

- Conference cancellations – and needing workable solution to in person conferences.



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** **March 31, 2020**

**TO:** General Distribution

**FROM:** Timothy Grisham, Deputy Director  
Washington Association of County Officials

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS DISCUSSION**

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### **Background and Summary:**

On March 31, 2020 WACO hosted a teleconference to discuss continuity of operations in county courthouses amid the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The following is a synthesis of the information discussed and shared. It has been determined that the next call will occur in one week's time on Tuesday, April 7, 2020 at 2 p.m.

### **WACO General Update**

- Roll call of call participants
  - 27 participants

### **Affiliate General Update**

- Assessors
  - Discussed personal property filing deadline dates – what counties may be extending the deadline.
    - Authority may be available through the ability to waive penalties – reference WAC 458.12.110
- Auditors
  - Discussed April elections for those counties conducting them. Elections require public access to observe process, canvassing board, and public meetings. Governor waived meetings – but other areas not addressed.
  - Discussed revenue tied to sales tax is dropping significantly, this will potentially impact local government significantly.
- Coroners
  - Majority of counties had prepared from a Coroner perspective.
  - Some smaller counties did not have a mass-casualty plan in place. WACME is assisting to help them.
  - Forensic Pathologist appointed to assist DOH and small counties with issues.
  - Connecting with CDC and other office through online conferencing.
- Prosecutors

- Looking into laws governing juvenile and adult prison populations, and what process to conduct hearings to approach if/how to release prisoners.
- Sheriff
  - Ensure all department heads have emergency plan to Sheriffs' offices as they are the emergency management office of the county.
  - If need help with emergency plan – reach out to Sheriffs to help in planning.
  - Discussed EOC command structures.
- Treasurers
  - Treasurers have discussed personal property taxes deadline with the Governor – compiling a list of who is extending to what date(s).
  - Discussed property tax collection and potential shortfalls.
  - Discussed taxing districts that would be impacted without collection: such as hospital districts.
  - Discussed individual tax collection extension request – or across the board.

### **Trending Issues**

- Staffing levels for counties in regard to the major impacts of reduced revenue.
  - Two largest funding mechanisms property and sales tax.

### **Open Discussion**

- Discussed possible special session.
  - Discussed questions from legislative staff regarding property tax extensions and WSACT response, including letter to Governor regarding leaving counties latitude to make decisions on extensions.



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** **March 24, 2020**

**TO:** General Distribution

**FROM:** Timothy Grisham, Deputy Director  
Washington Association of County Officials

**SUBJECT: NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) MEMBERSHIP DISCUSSION**

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### **Background and Summary:**

On March 24, 2020 WACO hosted two phone calls to discuss continuity of operations in county courthouses amid the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The first call was conducted with county Assessors, Auditors, and Treasurers. There were 25 WACO members on the call. The second call consisting of Clerks, Coroners, Prosecutors and Sheriffs had an additional 8 members on the call. The following is a synthesis of the information discussed and shared. It has been determined that a third single call will occur in one week's time on Tuesday, March 31, 2020 at 2 p.m.

#### Courthouse Security

- Is there a prohibition against checking people's temperatures prior to entering the courthouse?

#### Courts

- Courts open or closed based on jurisdiction
  - Some counties switching to telephonic hearings.
  - Some county's trials eliminated; many hearings cancelled.
  - Counties rearranging physical space in court to allow for social distancing.
- Some counties using time for increased training and archiving of records.
- If court open, increased screening at entrance is occurring.

#### Staffing

- Some counties employees not able to work at home and cannot be in office placed on paid administrative (or emergency) leave.
- Some counties only using existing leave amounts available.
- Counties with large revenue hit have instituted hiring freeze, step increase freeze, looking toward potential layoffs if goes longer.
- Some counties may not be closing down due to collective bargaining pay rates for closures too high for the counties to pay out.
- Some counties using small team in office to:

- Transmit work materials to remote employees that comes in from mail.
- Send notices and payments in mail.
- Federal reimbursement for staffing begins April 2 for two weeks (currently).

#### Tax Deadlines

- Property owners already contacting counties to seek tax relief.
- Assessors discussing freezing values, revaluation, what are the potential repercussions.
- Treasurers discussing how/when/if to push tax payment deadline back.
- Need to communicate differences in counties revenue impacts in small and large, and the need to preserve staff to insure proper taxation.

#### Unintended Consequences of Shut Down

- Potential lack of data collection during shut down period.
- Parenting plan amendments for primary living location of dependent and how to access the courts during emergency.
- Ability to meet deadlines under Public Records Act.
- How to have Open Public Meetings, statute requires providing viewing space.



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** **March 17, 2020**

**TO:** General Distribution

**FROM:** Timothy Grisham, Deputy Director  
Washington Association of County Officials

**SUBJECT: NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) MEMBERSHIP DISCUSSION**

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### **Background and Summary:**

On March 15, 2020 WACO hosted two phone calls to discuss continuity of operations in county courthouses amid the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The first call was conducted with county Assessors, Auditors, and Treasurers. There were 27 WACO members on the call. The second call consisting of Clerks, Coroners, Prosecutors and Sheriffs had an additional 8 members on the call.

The following is a synthesis of the information discussed and shared. It has been determined that a second set of calls will occur in one week's time on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 at 2 and 3 p.m. respectively.

#### Building partial or total closure:

- Many counties are shutting down lobbies frequent accessed by compromised community members such as seniors seeking information or filing for the senior tax exemption.
- In counties where the lobby or building is shut down, or to be shut down, services that are able to be conducted online will be identified and communicated to the community via press release, social media, posts on building.
  - Thurston County has utilized paid social media boosts to get the word out. Physical traffic has decreased.
  - Ferry County used social media, updated website, and posted physical signs on the courthouse.
- Counties are utilizing dropboxes for documents or payments to be dropped with varying pick up scheduled.
  - Clark pick up hourly
  - Kittitas every two hours
- Counties place common forms near dropboxes for people to pick up and take away.
- Some counties are able to forward phones to remote workers
  - Clark County has tested.
- Courier services need to be notified on how to proceed with closed office.

### Staffing:

- Counties are actively promoting remote working.
  - Clark County finance staff working remotely
  - Thurston County has a mix of remote and in person staffing.
- Essential, non-essential staffing.
  - Thurston County non-essential staff are placed on administrative leave (not sick-leave)
  - Thurston County essential staff who must be on-site will receive a 5% payroll bump temporarily.
- Staff living close to offices authorized to come in for a short period to check on essential functions such as mail delivery, etc.
- Staff who are ill are to remain home.
  - Clark and Thurston
  - County sick staff to be placed on administrative leave
- Assessor field staff put on staggered schedule so they are not all in the office at the same time to reduce office density.
- Assessor field staff to keep distance of at least six feet from community members when doing appraisals and follow sanitization standards.

### Incoming community members:

- Counties are developing steps to take in the occasions when someone from the community MUST come into the office.
  - Kittitas County is implementing a time stamp system for some documents to go between offices with shared services.
  - Thurston County created a single mail drop location in the lobby. Staff to remain at least six feet away from each other, only one individual to handle mail at a time. Follow wash and sanitization guidance before and after handling.
- All surfaces to be cleaned after each visit from an outside community member.

### Office specific functions:

- Auditors encourage title companies to utilize e-recording and electronically file REET.
- Treasurers have authority to change tax deadline to an appropriate day due to Governor emergency proclamation.
- Elections
  - Thurston County Auditor to delay election. Office to close following Friday certification of Presidential Primary.
  - All staff using gloves to process ballots, clean stations every two hours, practice social distancing.

### Courts:

- Clerks offices await judicial orders on how to proceed.
  - Ferry County has a judicial order in place to move all trials out until May. Currently the district court and Clerks office is open – while the remainder of the county services are closed to the public.
  - Skamania County has not had a judicial order to amend hearing schedules, but has discussed with other counties how to proceed if one should occur.
  - Whatcom County has an administrative order maintain all jury trials through March 26, but reducing all other legal proceedings.

- Counties utilizing video appearances when available, such as from county jail or other remote facilities.
- Counties working on a process for emergency protection orders.