



Solano County Supervisors Erin Hannigan, Skip Thomson and Monica Brown, left to right, listen to a coronavirus update from the county's public health officer, Dr. Bela Matyas, Tuesday, March 24, 2020. (Robinson Kuntz/Daily Republic)

Covid-19 likely to be part of Solano life for 6 more months

By [Todd R. Hansen](#)

FAIRFIELD — Dr. Bela Matyas told the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday that the current Covid-19 crisis is just beginning and will likely remain an issue for another four to six months.

“We are in all likelihood only at the beginning of this outbreak,” said Matyas, the public health officer for the county.

“I think we have to be realistic in our expectations that this will be with us for a while,” he said.



Solano County public health officer Dr. Bela Matyas addresses the Board of Supervisors, Tuesday, March 24, 2020. (Robinson Kuntz/Daily Republic)

While the update on the crisis covered a number of past issues – including the stay-at-home health order and directive issued by the county last week – it also noted possible supply and resource problems if those logistical issues are not resolved, and addressed the need to change the focus of the response for the future.

Meeting the greater need – whether that is food for the most vulnerable, transportation needs or addressing the economic pressures for individuals and small businesses – the crisis is not just a health matter anymore.

The National Guard, for example, is helping the Food Bank of

Contra Costa and Solano, and in time, food distribution options such as drive-through centers at the fairgrounds and other locations could become realities.

One of the signs in the changing environment is that the complaints the Public Health division receives have shifted from annoyances about social distancing, closing businesses and being told to stay at home except for essential needs, to complaints about neighbors and others not adhering to the social guidelines.

Supervisor Jim Sperring noted his concern that as this crisis is extended – not unlike recessions and other economic challenges – there will be an increase in domestic violence, violence against children and suicides. He wanted to know if the county has plans to deal with those situations.

He was told that one of the problems is that as stress increases over the economy and other issues, those who are feeling the effects are typically outside the usual populations for whom the county provides mental health and other services. The county simply does not know who those people are, or where they are located.

“We are trying to do what we do, just better,” Matyas said.

Still, Matyas said it is critical that the county still prioritize its response around the populations that are at the highest risk of health issues due to the novel coronavirus. At the top of that list is the elderly, and in turn, the need to focus on long-term care and similar facilities.

Matyas noted the county does not have the capacity to test all the individuals it wants to test, and certainly not all those individuals who want to be tested. He said that will remain that way until the manufacturing sector in the country catches up with the demand.

“No one has been happy with the testing limitations,” Matyas said in response to questions from Supervisor Skip Thomson, who said he was not happy with the speed of the response by the county.

Matyas added that while supplies such as masks used by health personnel are not in shortage at this time, that is a possibility, too.

“We are already using outdated material,” he said.

Thomson is not the only one who is unhappy.

The administration was criticized for putting county workers unnecessarily at risk – comments primarily from library services staff – but also concerns from social workers who said they are required to meet with people in the public for case management, but the county has failed to develop a protocol to keep them and their clients safe.

County employees are particularly upset that the county is requiring staff to use up their sick and vacation time if sent home, while other counties have continued to pay their employees.

The board also was told about the variety of new information formats the county is offering – from an updated website, to a dashboard option and Facebook presentations – which at least some officials indicated was needed because of the gap in local information available to the public.

The update to the board was presented in a very different setting, with the board chamber closed to the public and the supervisors spread out along the dais in an effort to meet social distancing standards.



A sparse audience attends the Solano County Board of Supervisors meeting that was limited because of coronavirus, Tuesday, March 24, 2020. (Robinson Kuntz/Daily Republic)

Corsello and County Counsel Bernadette Curry, who usually sit alongside the supervisors, were instead placed at the table where staff typically conduct their presentations.

Those presentations were made at the lectern where public comments are typically made, and the public comments were phoned in or received by email. The written comments were not read, but will be part of the meeting minutes.

Nearly 20 department heads and other staff members were spread out in the chamber, and at one

point, colleagues of retiring Human Resources Director Marc Fox entered the back of the

chamber and spread out along the wall as he was recognized for his work in the county. The usual group photo was not taken.

Matyas again emphasized the best way for residents to protect themselves is to wash their hands frequently, and avoid touching their faces, especially if they have come in contact with another person.

He said as more is learned about the virus and how it can be transmitted, the guidelines also will change, but the primary transmission remains person-to-person contact.

Most people who have the new coronavirus experience only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. Some people, especially older adults and those with underlying health problems, experience more severe illness, such as pneumonia.

The vast majority of people recover. The World Health Organization reports people with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks to recover.

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