

Lane County's resources devoted to the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted from emergency response to recovery, now that the County has entered Phase 1 of the State's reopening plan, according to County Administrator Steve Mokrohisky and Economic Development Manager Austin Ramirez, who told the Springfield City Club that the County met all of the conditions to move to reopening by May 15. They cautioned, however, that the virus is still here, and that social distancing and frequent hand washing are still very important to keep the county on a path to broader reopening, perhaps in June.

The County has released \$400 thousand in no interest loans to support local business, consisting of \$200 in county funds and \$100 thousand from each of the Cities of Eugene and Springfield. They have also applied for \$675 thousand in State funds, which would be distributed 55 percent to rural business and 45 percent to the metro area. \$930 thousand in renter assistance is now available from a state program and the county has applied for \$950 thousand in federal funds (the outcome won't be known for several weeks).

The County had about 900 of its 1600 employees begin to work remotely as the pandemic unfolded.

They are now in the process of bringing some of those employees back into offices, but slowly.

The unhoused population is a particular concern. Before the pandemic, the two largest community shelters – the Eugene Mission and the St. Vincent DePaul Dusk to Dawn program, could handle about 660 individuals. Pandemic restrictions reduced that capacity in half, meaning over 300 people suddenly lost access to shelter. Springfield and Willamalane responded by making the Memorial Building available for up to 50 people, and the Exposition Building at the Lane County Event Centers handled about 150. That still leaves a significant increase in the number of unhoused people for which no shelter is available.

The county will continue to monitor several areas and use "sentinel testing" -- random testing of individuals, to be prepared to anticipate any resurgence of the virus in the fall. The unhoused and prison populations will be watched and the ability to do contact tracing will continue to expand. Mr. Mokrohisky expressed confidence in the Country's ability to be prepared for a new wave but reminded the audience that adherence to remaining restrictions is essential.

Specifically on testing, Devon Ashbridge, the County Public information Officer, said there is no current capacity for large scale employee testing, although some private providers (such as NOVA health) do offer testing which may be covered by some insurance plans. She said that serological tests, (which attempt to detect the presence of antibodies) are being done, but that there is less confidence in the accuracy of those tests.

It is possible that the County could enter Phase I of the reopening program in June, but that will depend on continued decline in cases, and continued increases in testing capacity. The County must remain in Phase I for at least 21 days, so the earliest possible date is June 5.