



A Path to Reopening Beaufort: A Message from Mayor Newton

Over the last seven weeks, we have deliberately and incrementally implemented our COVID-19 measures to flatten the curve and protect our many vulnerable citizens. We continue to closely monitor predictive models and available data to inform our actions.

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation projected NC COVID-19 deaths would peak on April 16, and that hospital resource use would peak on April 15. Those predictions were largely accurate. The institute also predicts that after May 11, 2020, relaxing social distancing requirements may be possible in NC with implementation of containment strategies that include testing, contact tracing, isolation, and limiting gathering size. This containment strategy is consistent with Governor Cooper's three-step plan for reopening NC. The governor's stay at home and limited travel executive order is still in effect.

Regionally, the number of positive tests for COVID-19 has remained relatively low: Carteret County – 27; Craven County – 36; Jones County – 9; Onslow County – 33; Pamlico County – 6. Significantly, the number of active cases in Carteret County has been stable at around 5 to 7 per day.

These data and the predictive models indicate a more positive outlook. Stay-at-home and social distancing measures have been successful in flattening the curve. With the number of positive COVID-19 tests and active patients in Carteret County stabilized and well within our hospital's capacity, it is time to start looking at measures to reopen our community while at the same time, staying prepared to respond should positive case numbers start to increase significantly.

The first of our reopening measures was the removal of the checkpoint at Turner Street Saturday at midnight, followed by the reopening of NC101 and Live Oak Street on Monday, April 20, 2020. If circumstances dictate, we will resume the limited access and checkpoint.

Additional reopening measures will be effective on Friday, April 24, 2020, and include the following:

1. The town will no longer be closed to those who reside outside of Carteret County. In particular, we recognize that second home owners need to check on their property and they are a critical and valued component of our community. We appreciate their patience and understanding.
2. A new category of businesses can now reopen: retail businesses that are not "essential businesses," but that may sell their products by curbside pickup, delivery by mail, or delivery to the customer's doorstep in strict compliance with the social distancing and disinfection standards of the Town's Emergency Proclamation and the Governor's Executive Order 131.
3. Real Estate firms may now show listed properties to potential buyers, provided the properties are vacant, that social distancing measures are strictly enforced, and that frequently touched surfaces like doorknobs, light switches, etc., are disinfected.
4. Marinas are no longer prohibited from providing services to those who do not reside in Carteret County.

The remainder of the restrictions from the Town's Emergency Proclamation from March 29 will remain in effect through April 29. If conditions in our region remain in a stable (or improved) condition, then we anticipate deferring to the Governor's executive orders and his plan for reopening North Carolina.

We reopen in a new environment where social distancing and emphasis on hygiene will continue for the foreseeable future. The crowded, large-scale events we frequently host in Beaufort will need to be scaled or postponed for COVID-19 considerations. Summer 2020 in Beaufort will be a big challenge.