



# Commissioners of Mifflin County

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, May 11, 2020

LEWISTOWN – Stating that they are “duty-bound” to express the frustration and disagreement of Mifflin County constituents as it pertains to the Governor not moving the county into the “Yellow Phase” of the Commonwealth’s Phased Reopening Plan, the Mifflin County Commissioners today sent a letter to Governor Wolf.

The commissioners called on Wolf to immediately begin reopening plans for Mifflin County effective May 15, 2020. The County, itself, will return the Mifflin County Courthouse to normal operations effective Monday, May 18, 2020. All visitors to the Courthouse will be required to wear a mask and follow proper CDC social distancing guidelines. The commissioners still urge Mifflin County citizens to use online measures when possible for completing essential work, such as filing documents or doing title searches.

“By easing restrictions, small retail and service businesses who compete with big, national chains such as Lowes and Wal-Mart, can be put on a level playing field and begin the process of restarting the engine that drives our local community,” the letter states.

“If large shopping crowds can congregate at Lowes, why should a small, local retailer or greenhouse/landscaper not be permitted to service a handful of patrons, all the while following appropriate business and building safety and health guidance? Local professionals, such as lawyers, real estate agents, and investment advisors can surely conduct one-on-one business under the appropriate health and safety guidance with much less risk than dozens of people walking in-and-out of Wal-Mart, continually touching carts, food, and other goods. The people of Mifflin County can safely take the small, incremental step allowed by the ‘Yellow-Phase’ guidelines and desperately need to do so.”

The commissioners pointed to the county’s low overall number of positive COVID-19 cases, and noted that local health facilities have appropriate capacity to handle both current caseloads and potential surges that could arise.

The commissioners also noted other counties within the region have already received the Yellow designation.

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Unlike some other counties, Mifflin County is not attempting to defy the Governor's order.

"We realize that we do not have the legal authority to unilaterally counter your Order; the State's authority to promulgate Stay-At-Home policies and regulations has been upheld by the highest courts that have considered this matter. We also acknowledge that as commissioners, we do not have any role in enforcement of the regulations promulgated by you and your offices. To that end, we have encouraged local businesses to keep in mind the enforcement powers of the State with regard to their individual licenses and practices, along with the terms of their own insurance policies."

"The county does not want to jeopardize state and federal funding opportunities for any emergency relief, resulting in the already burdened local taxpayer bearing an additional economic cost. Instead, we appeal to you to understand our reasoned and rational basis for moving Mifflin County into the 'Yellow-Phase.'"

The commissioners closed the letter by indicating that it is imperative that the Governor is mindful of the position he is putting local, mostly small businesses in: remain closed and perhaps never be able to reopen, or reopen in defiance of your order and risk citations and fines.

"We call on you to move Mifflin County into the 'Yellow-Phase' so that our people are not forced to make that choice."

END