

MEDIA RELEASE



Contact: Shyanne Palmus
Communications Coordinator
Shyanne.Palmus@co.benton.wa.us
509-222-3760

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 29, 2020

BENTON COUNTY LEADERS PUSH TO ENTER PHASE 2

Action by Board of Health and County Commissioners Still Required to Advance Proposal

Kennewick, WA – Today, Benton County Administrators announced their intention to have the Board of County Commissioners consider applying for Benton County to be moved into Phase 2 of Governor Inslee’s [Safe Start Washington](#) Phased Reopening Plan.

The Commissioners will discuss and give formal direction on this issue at their next regular Board meeting, to be held on Tuesday, June 2, 2020 at 9 AM. As of May 28, 2020, Benton County is not considered eligible to apply for Phase 2 under the State guidelines. [The current Safe Start Status is available here.](#)

“I have been in contact with each Board member individually over the past few weeks, and they believe it is essential that Benton County move into Phase 2 so we can start the path to economic recovery for our struggling local businesses and community members. We can no longer sit and wait – it’s time for us to be able to move forward,” said Jerrod MacPherson, County Administrator.

If the Board approves, Benton County leaders will work in conjunction with the Benton-Franklin Health District to ensure that Benton County has all the elements necessary to meet Phase 2 requirements. The variance request plan, must include information regarding the County’s healthcare system readiness, testing capacity and availability, case and contact investigations, and the ability to protect high-risk populations.

“Commissioner Delvin has told me that our residents have paid a high enough price throughout this pandemic. We are responding with everything we have so that we can get our community back on its feet as quickly and safely as possible – getting to Phase 2 is the next step in that process,” said MacPherson.

The decision to apply for a variance will still need to be approved by the Benton-Franklin Health District Board of Health as well as the Benton County Commission. If approved by local agencies, the variance application will then be submitted by the Benton-Franklin Health District to the Washington Secretary of Health for consideration. Staff will work tirelessly to get all the necessary information and documentation gathered and packaged for submittal as early as possible.

If Benton County is approved to move to Phase 2, avoiding a spike in cases is of paramount importance in order to avoid being pushed back into Phase 1. We will need our community’s help to keep us on the right track to a safe, healthy recovery. COVID-19 will continue to be public health threat in our community for some time, but we believe we are prepared now, more than ever, to manage that threat and get Benton County on the road to recovery.

###