

PRESS RELEASE - ESSEX COUNTY, NEW YORK

Issued March 24, 2020

A MESSAGE FROM ESSEX COUNTY TO OUR VISITORS, WEEKENDERS AND SECOND HOME OWNERS

Elizabethtown, NY - The Essex County Board of Supervisors is issuing the following statement to its visitors, weekenders, second home owners and short term rental owners and listings:

Essex County currently has four (4) confirmed cases of COVID-19 (2019 Novel Coronavirus) and is responding with measures to proactively reduce further exposure as it impacts our limited resources.

To date we have seen an alarming influx of travelers from outside the County who are staying at second homes and short term rentals, like Airbnb and Vrbo. While you may be seeking refuge from the larger amount of cases downstate, you must be aware that this is a global pandemic. You and your families have a critical role to fulfill in halting the rapid spread of this virus, which can be dangerous and even fatal to the elderly and people with underlying health conditions.

The novel coronavirus pandemic has impacted New York State, which is responding with all resources to contain a growing number of cases, which includes more than 20,000 confirmed cases and multiple deaths. Essex County has four (4) confirmed cases, none of which originated from within the county. However, a number of exposures will increase with the movement of non-residents into our area from other parts of the state and country, which will result in an inordinate strain upon the resources of public health, first responders, health care providers, our hospitals and other government personnel.

Essex County is an extremely rural county with only 38,000 residents. We have few hospitals and those that we do have are not capable of handling an increased number of patients. Additional needs presented with the increased presence of out-of-county persons at our hospitals will tax our medical care system beyond its capacity.

Currently, Essex County and its medical providers have limited COVID-19 test kits and will not be able to test for the disease and have stringent guidelines as to who can receive these tests.

Additionally, as a rural county, most small businesses are closed, services are severely strained and grocery stores, while still open to the public, are experiencing a shortage of food and basic supplies. Grocery store hours of operation are being modified to keep up with the demand.

As a vaccine does not exist, we have limited capacity to test, our hospitals are small and incapable of handling additional influx and our stores and infrastructure are incapable of providing supplies to a larger population, we are asking that you respect

the integrity of our hospitals and infrastructure and not travel to Essex County from any area at this time. This is in keeping with federal and state mandates that people stay at home and stay put. It is far better for you to stay home and limit your movements.

You should not have an expectation that resources will be available to you here that are not available to you in your home town. Essex County has a limited number of health care resources and hospital beds and there is no testing.

ADDITIONAL REQUEST TO PROPERTY OWNERS TO REMOVE SHORT TERM RENTAL LISTINGS FROM SERVICES SUCH AS AIRBNB AND VRBO.

In addition, the Essex County Board of Supervisors strongly and respectfully requests that all property owners, (including second homeowners) remove any short-term rental listings from services such as Airbnb and Vrbo immediately and not rent.

As we work together to minimize the spread of this virus across our most vulnerable populations, we respectfully ask that property owners comply with this request to limit new exposures and protect the health and welfare of all by removing short-term rental listings from services such as Airbnb and Vrbo, and not renting their short-term rentals.

Finally, non-essential gatherings of individuals of any size for any reason (e.g. parties, celebrations, or other social events) are canceled or postponed through April 22, 2020, pursuant to NYS Executive Order 202.10. In relation to Airbnb, Vrbo dwellings that are rented by multiple families, Essex County views that as a violation of this Executive Order.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Shaun Gilliland, Chairman
Essex County Board of Supervisors