

Highland Community News

County developing reopening plans

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Salons like Stylish Nails & Spa, 27880 Base Line, are among the business sectors outlined by the state to remain closed during phase 2 of the governor's plan to reopen the state and relax coronavirus suppression measures.

hector hernandez

On Tuesday, May 5, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors discussed a preliminary plan for reopening sectors of the county's businesses as early as Friday, May 8. The board intended to solidify its plan later in the week.

The discussion about reopening followed an announcement by the Gov. Gavin Newsom that "low-risk" sectors could reopen as part of "Phase 2" of the state's COVID-19 mitigation policy.

"Low risk" sectors include businesses such as florists, sporting goods stores, apparel retailers, manufacturers and distributors. Companies in these sectors will need to comply with a variety of measures the county and the governor hope will prevent a significant upsurge in COVID-19 cases following relaxation of stay-at-home guidelines.

Newsom announced a partnership with the University of California, San Francisco and University of California, Los Angeles to immediately begin training workers for a landmark contact tracing program that will help contain the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic while the state looks to modify the stay-at-home order. Contact tracing will be a form of tracking citizens who are sick or who may become sick, it will also allow airports, retailers and restaurants to take a person's temperature before entering their establishment. The first 20-hour virtual training academy for tracers began on Wednesday, May 6, with the goal of training 20,000 individuals in two months.

Newsom also signed an executive order on Monday, May 4, directing the state public health officer to establish criteria to determine whether and how, in light of local conditions, local health officers may implement public health measures less restrictive than the statewide public health directives. Counties must meet criteria including demonstrating they have a low prevalence of COVID-19, that they meet testing and contact tracing criteria, that their health care system is prepared in case they see a sudden rise in cases and that they have plans in place to protect vulnerable populations.

The board discussed ideas for what a Phase 2 reopening would entail. Other business sectors, including sit-down restaurants, shopping malls, gyms and beauty salons, would be addressed in the ramp-up to Phase 3.

The county has established a COVID-19 Recovery Coalition involving regular dialogue with more than 30 industry leaders to solicit their input as to how to best reopen the county. This group will help focus on establishing specific re-opening guidelines for sectors ranging from transportation and healthcare to education and tourism, along with faith-based institutions.

“I’m here to affirm that the county has progressed in fighting COVID-19. We’re not only well-prepared and ready to respond to a surge, but we’re happy to report that in the last 30 days, as a county, we flattened the curve,” said Curt Hagman, chairman of the Board of Supervisors. “We’d like to thank everyone in our county for practicing physical distancing, wearing face coverings and practicing good hygiene. It’s made a significant difference.”

The supervisor noted that the county's hospital COVID-19 census shows that the county's surge capacity is well in excess of the projected need, as is its supply of ventilators. The county also said it has made noteworthy progress on testing and contact tracing programs.

The county will be sharing more information on Phase 2 and Phase 3 reopening in a future update.