



Hello Coupeville,

I have been receiving a few calls about the COVID19 virus, Musselfest and the County's declaration of a "state of emergency." I hope to answer some questions here and make sure everyone is working from the same information.

### **What is COVID19?**

COVID19 is a new virus, spreading from person to person. It is spread by close contact with an infected person or by respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Most people experience mild, flu-like symptoms such as fever, cough and difficulty breathing. People especially vulnerable to this virus are those over 60 years of age with preexisting health issues such as heart conditions and respiratory problems.

### **How can I avoid COVID19?**

Prevention suggestions for COVID19 are very basic, the same suggestions made every flu season. Wash your hands often with warm water and soap, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, avoid contact with people who are sick, stay home if you are sick, and cover your mouth and nose with tissue or a sleeve when coughing or sneezing. And if your age or medical condition makes you vulnerable to a cold, flu or virus, stay away from crowds.

### **Where can I get more information on COVID19?**

WA State Department of Health - <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus>

Island County Public Health - <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/Health/Pages/COVID-19.aspx>

Whidbey Health - <https://whidbeyhealth.org/news/low-risk-of-corona-virus-on-whidbey-island>

### **Why did Island County declare a State of Emergency?**

A declaration of a State of Emergency is an administrative action only. It DOES NOT mean Island County has an outbreak of COVID 19. There are no known cases of COVID 19 in Island County at this time. This declaration simply allows the County to activate its emergency management plans and use emergency resources should the need arise. This allows them to be better prepared should we have active cases in the County. The State of WA made this same declaration as well as several other counties and cities in the state. The Town of Coupeville will be making the same declaration soon. You can view this action as your municipalities and elected officials being responsible and planning ahead in order to serve you as quickly as possible should the need arise.

**Why wasn't Musselfest cancelled?**

On Monday morning, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, I met with representatives from Island County Public Health and Department of Emergency Management and Musselfest organizers. I was advised by the Island County personnel that they saw no reason to cancel Musselfest. These are the Island County resources I count on to have a level of knowledge and expertise in both health and emergency situations that I do not. I made the decision to follow their advice and Musselfest preparation has been full steam ahead.

Musselfest is an important cultural, recreational and economic event in Coupeville. This year will be the 34th Musselfest in our Town! It is the celebration of our world renowned "bold, briny and blue" Penn Cove Mussels. We are proud to be the home of Penn Cove Shellfish and we want the world to know it. Musselfest an important economic boost, during the shoulder season, for our restaurants, lodging establishments, retail shops and several nonprofits. Musselfest is also a break from the cold, wet winter, a time for our local residents to come out and enjoy a beer, a bowl of mussels and listen to some music. Musselfest is a part of Coupeville tradition.

COVID19 is a new virus. Information and advice are changing on a daily, if not hourly, basis. The bottom line is everyone must make their own decisions as to what precautions they want to take and what they feel comfortable with. The one instruction that is completely consistent, this year as in any flu season, is if you are sick, stay home. Don't go to work, don't go to school, don't go to public events. The festival organizers are bringing in additional hand washing stations, hand sanitizers will be available, and volunteers will be disinfecting hard surfaces all weekend.

I hope this answers most questions but I am always available if you have something on your mind.

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