

# The Bandera PROPHEET

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Governor issues executive orders, Bandera County holds emergency meeting

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The Bandera Prophet

This morning, Governor Greg Abbott issued executive orders requiring schools, bars and gyms to close. After midnight tomorrow, restaurants may offer to-go service only, and group gatherings may not exceed 10 people.

Thus far, Bandera remains free of confirmed cases, however neighboring Kendall County reports one, with two more potential cases awaiting results.

Yesterday, Thunder in the Hill Country became the latest major event to cancel in Bandera. Hours before county commissioners were due to discuss in an emergency meeting whether to allow the annual rally to proceed from March 26-29, Biker Rallies of Texas CEO and owner Bill Taber announced yesterday he was postponing via social media.

“After many discussions with Bandera County and City Officials and the opinions and feedback from the local Bandera community, businesses and our valued customers we have made the decision to postpone Thunder in the Hill Country 2020 Rally due to the Covid-19 Virus crisis” Taber wrote on Facebook. “We feel that health and safety of our customers, employees of the rally and the local Bandera community outweigh the continuation of Thunder in the Hill Country 2020 Rally as scheduled.”

Taber said he hopes to reschedule for some time in May, depending on what happens with the virus. He said pre-registration was down by about 150 people, and others had begun to cancel.

“I would like to emphasize that the Bandera County and City Officials worked diligently with us,” Taber wrote. “We all feel that this is the prudent and proper decision due to this crisis we are all experiencing this time in our country’s history.”

County Judge Richard Evans said he is closely monitoring the progression of the virus, and it has thus far not reached Bandera County. He said although the most current order is to keep groups smaller than 10 people, he is not prepared to declare a state of emergency.

“Two hours from now, something may have to happen. If it gets bad enough, we’ll have to do it,” Evans said. “We’re not there yet.”

City of Bandera Mayor Suzanne Schauman said the city would follow the county’s direction, however ruinous it may be.

“If we shut down the city, we’ll be devastated,” Schauman said. “I have seven employees. [If we’re closed] between one to four weeks, they will be homeless, hungry and without a car.”

Other business owners expressed dismay at the thought of forcing closures via an emergency declaration, stating the rally’s postponement has already cost them dearly. The owner of the Twin Elm Guest Ranch said she had already lost \$30,000 due to the cancellation, and she now has to refund \$5,000 in reservation fees.

“I would like to consider the effect it would have on people in Pipe Creek, Medina, Lakehills and Tarpley,” Schauman said. “Please carefully consider your decision.”

Other closures include the Frontier Times and Natural History Museums, and the Bandera, Lakehills and Medina Libraries. Most restaurants are staying the course, remaining open even if they have to reduce their menu options.

Silver Sage Executive Director Art Crawford said the senior center is closed to the public for activities, but open for lunch - which is available for dine-in, take-out or drive-by. On Wednesday, he said eight people came inside to eat, and 26 people used the drive-thru service. Crawford said anyone entering the facility must have their temperature taken, anyone with a fever over 99.4 degrees will not be allowed in.

Pct. 2 Commissioner Bobby Harris said he has recommended rescheduling the Medina River Cleanup, which is set for May 2. He said 225 volunteers show up to clean up, and most of them have been targeted as the most susceptible to COVID-19.

The Lake Medina Shores Volunteer Fire Department has cancelled its biggest fundraiser of the year, Harris said, and the Pipe Creek Volunteer Fire Department has cancelled Bingo.

All district court jury trials have been postponed, Evans said, and filing and notice deadlines have been extended. Sheriff Dan Butts said all people coming into the jail are being screened, and visitation has been suspended with the exception of attorney meetings. Also, inmates will not be working at any of the county's compact station to intake and sort recyclables.

"I don't want to expose them to everyone's trash and potentially bring it back into the jail," Butts said.

Dr. Bryan Sims said community spread is growing, he expects it to peak as confirmed cases are on the upward climb. He said discretionary travel should be avoided and shopping/social trips should be minimized.

"This is a very, very contagious virus, much more than the flu," Sims said. "Of 200,000 exposures in the world there are 8,000 deaths, that means one in 25 people could die. That's very serious."

Sims said to get tested, patients will have to present certain symptoms, including a fever of 101 degrees or more. Sims said the cost of the test is free with no deductible or co-pay for the insured. For those without health insurance, the test costs \$95.

In response to a question about why the public has engaged in mass hysteria, Sims said communicability is the main factor.

He said scientists are working to produce a vaccine, which is now in Phase I trials.

"We may have it within a year," Sims said.