



COUNTY OF LAKE

Board of Supervisors

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PRESS RELEASE **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Leading for the Future in Uncertain Times *County Insights from Moke Simon, Chair of the Board of Supervisors*

LAKE COUNTY, CA (April 22, 2020) – Leadership under many types of circumstances can be challenging, but environments where information is limited, or truly developing in real time, make particular demands of those with significant responsibility. Lake County's Public Health Officer, Gary Pace, MD, MPH, and County, City, Tribal, and community leaders have sought to be proactive throughout the COVID-19 crisis, and act in accordance with the best available evidence.

Some of that evidence has been historical. For example, evidence informing COVID-19 response has included review of medical and economic consequences of past pandemic events, and interventions by leaders at those moments in time.

Some evidence has been proximate. Examples of evidence that could be described as proximate include observing the spread of COVID-19, and its effects on local healthcare systems and more granular areas of high concern, such as Skilled Nursing Facilities, in other parts of the United States or around the world.

Recent testing demonstrating the presence of COVID-19 in Lake County's raw sewage is another example of proximate evidence. This testing suggests Community Spread of COVID-19 has probably occurred in Lake County, but is ultimately limited in descriptive value; it affirms the need of further testing of mildly and even asymptomatic residents, but stops well short of telling us how many people have been infected.

Community frustration over the limited available direct evidence has mirrored public officials' own concerns, particularly regarding inadequate testing. While some progress has been recently made, rural communities like Lake County continue to wait for the State and Federal governments to make good on many promises to enhance the availability of necessary funds, resources, and supplies.

Such was the environment that set the stage for Tuesday's meeting of the Lake County Board of Supervisors. The lengthy session demonstrated each member of the Board's strong commitment to meeting the moment and serving residents. Despite meaningful disagreements surrounding the "how," and what evidence should be assigned greatest weight in decision-making, genuine compassion and concern were in abundance.

Moke Simon, Chair of the Board of Supervisors, took time to offer some valuable insights.

"We have been Sheltering in Place for more than a month now, and people and businesses have been hit really hard," stated Simon. "There are five passionate people

on our Board, and all of us have been hearing from our constituents, folks that are really suffering. We all want to see our economy opened back up as soon as possible, but we have to recognize the risks. [Tuesday's] discussion was really lively, as it should be. We care, man!"

"Dr. Pace has shown strong leadership, too, by listening to the concerns of people in our communities, and considering that information, and how our needs may be different than [those of larger jurisdictions]," continued Simon. "He is also looking to [maintain] protections that will keep our hospitals and clinics from being overwhelmed. This [has been] a deadly pandemic around the world, and I truly believe the decisions made so far have saved lives."

In his weekly comprehensive update, Dr. Pace indicated five of the six confirmed positive cases in Lake County were now considered, "Recovered," and off of isolation. He affirmed that "Cases [that is, the rate of new confirmed positive tests] are starting to drop off," regionally and statewide, and, "We may be passing the peak in certain areas," while others, "may still be increasing."

Yet, Pace was clear that tough decisions were ahead, and the need to continue significant precautions should remain an expectation. "Immunity within the population" was described by Pace as a "long-range goal."

Consistent with recent statements by Governor Newsom, Dr. Pace stated that he did not expect loosening of restrictions would immediately bring back "Business as usual," and noted, "Experts [are predicting we are] not going to get back to large gatherings of normal activity anytime in the near future," acknowledging such activities could remain prohibited, "Until a vaccine is available, or the virus mutates, and is no longer a problem."

Pace noted individuals particularly vulnerable to severe consequences of COVID-19 would need to continue to take enhanced protective measures, including a lengthier period of self-isolation, noting "Most of society has been shut down," with a particular interest in limiting risk to those most susceptible to complications.

With economic and other challenges mounting, Pace stated he was, "Trying to do three things at once," concurrently working to:

- 1) Institute and evolve strategies to, "Slow the spread of the virus through the community,"
- 2) Support nursing homes, clinics and hospitals to, "Prepare for worst case surges," and
- 3) Loosen restrictions, "in a safe way, that allows more mobility, reopening of businesses, [and gets] the economy moving again."

District 5 Supervisor, Rob Brown, challenged Pace to move as quickly as possible to allow businesses to operate, where it could be safely done, urging, "Common sense needs to dictate some of this." Brown also noted many business leaders are experts in their own industries, with great insight into how they could operate while limiting COVID-19 risk.

Brown and District 3 Supervisor, Eddie Crandell, have persisted in efforts through the Blue Collar Committee (BCC), to listen to the needs of local businesses and recommend solutions. They indicated the BCC already had templates for some types of businesses to reopen, and they were willing to share them with those putting together their own plans.

Lake County Sheriff Brian Martin stated he was, “In favor of getting things back to normal as quickly as possible, as safely as possible,” and recommended Dr. Pace and Board members consider the need to coordinate with local agencies, to ensure enforcement of any changes to the Health Orders could be appropriately uniform. Martin noted he has, “An obligation to [uphold] everyone’s Constitutional Rights.”

District 2 Supervisor, Bruno Sabatier, encouraged local leaders to be realistic when taking next steps, and acknowledged that, “People are afraid of the virus, and also what their finances will look like in the near future.” Sabatier mentioned he was aware many local residents had attempted to access to the federal government’s, “Paycheck Protection Program” (PPP), only to see those funds go to, “much larger businesses than what everyone anticipated.”

Supervisor Simon appreciated the conversation, and the balance of voices on the Board:

“I’m glad we’re talking about getting some [low risk, socially distanced] recreation going again, opening up other things. As we’re doing this, there may [also] be a time where [COVID-19 infections] do escalate in Lake County. We have to continue to prepare on multiple fronts, like Dr. Pace said. I know [District 4 Supervisor, Tina Scott] has been working with Pastor Shannon, County Social Services and Behavioral Health staff, and others to protect some of our homeless and vulnerable individuals, and that work remains just as important as the steps we are taking to reopen our economy.”

“We need to be ready to go, when opening up,” concluded Simon. “Each business owner will be taking on responsibility, liability. Sharing best practices will help us all prepare.”

Live video of all Board of Supervisors meetings, including Dr. Pace’s valuable weekly COVID-19 updates, is accessible through the County website and Lake County PEG TV (TV8).

Agendas, including instructions for participating in Board meetings via Zoom, and live and archived video are available at:

<https://countyoflake.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

To comment on any Board of Supervisors Agenda Item, write to the Clerk to the Board of Supervisors by 4pm the day before the meeting, PublicComment@lakecountyca.gov.

Lake County-focused COVID-19 information is accessible through the County’s homepage, <http://www.lakecountyca.gov/>, and at <http://health.co.lake.ca.us/>.

If you have public health-related questions about COVID-19, please direct them to MHOAC@lakecountyca.gov, or call Public Health’s COVID-19 line, at 707-263-8174.