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MEMORANDUM: Planning for the Coronavirus and COVID-19

UPDATE 5/22/20 – Our office began operations changes related to the COVID-19 outbreak on March 17, 2020. Effective June 1, 2020, we will begin resuming elements of our office's operations. Changes are highlighted below.

Please see below for additional details and check our website

www.starkcountyohio.gov/treasurer, or call us at 330-451-7814 for more information.

What is COVID-19, and why is it serious?

Public health officials tell us that COVID-19 is a disease that results from infection with the novel coronavirus. Early symptoms include runny nose, sore throat, dry cough, and fever, which can lead to very serious breathing difficulties for vulnerable populations including the elderly and the immune compromised.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is highly contagious and can live in the air for several hours and on surfaces for several days. Mortality rates for COVID-19 are still being analyzed, but early estimates suggest it is significantly more deadly than other viral infections like the flu. COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization.

How can I protect myself from COVID-19?

The Centers for Disease Control and Stark County Health District recommend using typical infectious disease precautions including:

- Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (approximately the amount of time needed to sing "Happy Birthday" twice).
- Avoiding touching your mouth, nose, or eyes with unwashed hands.
- Covering sneezes and coughs with a tissue and throwing the tissue in the trash immediately.
- Avoiding contact with those who are sick (known as "social distancing").
- Staying home if you are ill.
- Cleaning and disinfecting all "high touch" objects and surfaces (like doorknobs and phones) daily.

Additional information about COVID-19 is available from the Ohio Department of Health at 1-833-4-ASK-ODH, 7 days a week between 9am – 8pm, and online at

<https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/home>.

What is the Treasurer's office doing in response to COVID-19?

The Stark County Treasurer's Office has implemented the following protocols:

- The Treasurer's office will have windows with a plastic barrier for employees to assist customers.
- Employees of the Stark County Treasurer's Office will be required to wear a mask while assisting customers.
- Employees will continue to use gloves and/or hand sanitizer when handling mail and outside paper work.
- It is recommended that customers call before visiting the office to allow staff to gather information, prepare documents, and lessen wait times.
- Please keep in mind that many self-service options including downloadable forms, property record searches, and online property tax payments are available as well as other options on how to pay may be found on the Treasurer's website at www.starkcountyohio.gov/treasurer
- Our office staff is also available to assist you by phone Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. by calling (330) 451-7814.
- If visiting the office you are required to observe social distancing of six feet or more. Please follow the marked spaces and directions as indicated on the floor when approaching the entrance/exit to the Treasurer office.

If you have a fever or are sick and exhibiting signs of illness **Stay Home**.

In addition to practicing and encouraging good personal hygiene, the Treasurer's Office is responding to COVID-19 by focusing on the "social distancing" aspects of the Centers for Disease Control's recommendations. As such, the following operational changes will be in effect beginning on Monday, June 1, 2020 until further notice.

Tax Payments

During this period payments, by mail will continue to be processed and taxpayers are encouraged to utilize checks, cashier's checks or money orders where necessary and online and phone payment options available at www.starkcountyohio.gov/department/payment-options.

Taxpayers are also encouraged to use the lobby drop box located inside the Stark County Administration Building. Taxes may also be paid by Credit/Debit cards or ACH check at one of three payment Kiosks located at the Alliance BMV/Title, Massillon AAA/Title, or North Canton BMV/Title offices. There is a 2.35% convenience fee charged when using credit/debit cards or \$1.95 for an ACH check.

Payment Plans

To lessen wait times new delinquent tax payment plans will be offered during this time by appointment only. Please call us at 330-451-7814 to schedule your appointment. Taxpayers on existing delinquent tax payment plans may continue to make payments consistent with the recommendation above.

Foreclosures

During this time, all new foreclosures have been temporarily suspended. Additionally, the Treasurer's Office is suspending further foreclosure action on occupied structures (owner-occupied/rentals). Foreclosure actions on unoccupied/ unimproved properties are temporarily suspended. Please periodically check our website for any changes to this status.

Sheriff Tax Foreclosure Sales

During this time all, Sheriff tax foreclosure sales have been temporarily suspended. Please periodically check our website for any changes to this status.

Department Pay-Ins

The Treasurer's Office will accept daily pay-ins by cash and check from other Stark County offices and departments. Electronic pay-ins will continue as normal.

Office Operations

Taxpayers and others interacting with the Treasurer's office are strongly recommended to wear masks for their own safety and the safety of Treasurer's Office employees for the duration of their transaction.

Taxpayers and others interacting with the office must maintain at least 6 feet of separation while in public office spaces. Spaces marking 6 feet of separation have been applied and must be followed.

Office Staffing.

During this period, all staff shall report for duty on site. Staff responsible for critical business processes who become sick or who are responsible for caring for loved ones during this period may utilize public health emergency leave consistent with Stark County Treasurer personnel requirements. Additional leave requests beyond those categories will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Employees must wear masks and gloves when interacting with members of the public, and as otherwise appropriate under current orders from the Ohio Department of Health. Employees must also conduct daily wellness checks, and record/track the results of those checks consistent with Emergency Management Agency recommendations.

Employees who are ill must stay home. Failure to do so may result in discipline consistent with Stark County personnel policies.

When will these changes go into effect?

These changes to Treasurer's office processes and procedures are effective beginning on June 1st 2020 and will continue until further notice. Our office will continue to remain in touch with County public health personnel and other relevant stakeholders to assist as we continue through this unprecedented and challenging time.

Where can I find additional information about these changes?

Taxpayers and other stakeholders are encouraged to monitor the Treasurer's office website (www.starkcountyohio.gov/treasurer) for updates. Additional information is also available by phone at (330) 451-7814 during regular business hours. Monday – Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm

Conclusion.

The Treasurer's office takes our duty to serve and protect the public very seriously. We believe the changes outlined above continue to position us to respond effectively to the threat of COVID-19 and to continue providing service to our community. We appreciate your continued patience and understanding as we navigate these uncharted circumstances together.