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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**APRIL 17, 2020**

**MOST COUNTY OFFICES TO REMAIN CLOSED IN EFFORT TO SLOW THE SPREAD OF COVID-19**

Today, Governor Eric Holcomb announced he will be extending his Stay at Home Order and continues to encourage all Hoosiers to “hunker down.” His extension, originally set to expire April 20, 2020 at 11:59pm will be extended through the end of April. For this reason, the Board of Commissioners will be extending the County Offices closure through May 3, 2020, with offices expected to begin opening on Monday, May 4, 2020. If the Governor again extends his order for Hoosiers to “hunker down” the Board will likewise extend the County Offices closure.

The Board of Commissioners also encourages all residents of St. Joseph County to “hunker down” and limit travel and social interaction as much as possible to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, most County Offices will remain closed for the duration of the Governor’s Stay at Home Order.

During this unprecedented time, the Board is appreciative of how county offices have risen to the occasion and found creative ways of still serving the public, albeit mostly remotely. Whether it is through increased phone interactions or through online forms and email, the public can rest assured that the essential functions of county government continue.

The County-City Building will remain open for people needing to access the Health Department’s Immunization Clinic, but all other offices will be closed to walk-in traffic. Many services are available online through the county’s website, <http://sjcindiana.com>.

Residents are encouraged to contact county departments via phone and email. A full directory of county offices is available online at <http://sjcindiana.com/directory>.

Persons needing to conduct business with the courts should utilize drop boxes located in Courthouse 1 and should utilize the main entrance located at 101 S. Main St., South Bend, IN 46601. During this time, the courts will be performing some essential functions.

The Mishawaka Annex will also remain closed through May 3, 2020.

Outdoor recreational activities are still considered essential as these activities promote physical and emotional wellbeing. For this reason, the County Parks will remain open, and are not assessing gate fees. While parks offices, playgrounds, and public restrooms are closed, the parks and trails offer a great opportunity for exercise while complying with all recommended physical distancing practices.

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