April 9, 2020

To All Concerned:

As you are aware, we are all in the midst of a public health emergency at the global and local level. At the local level, my team at Geauga Public Health is stretched to capacity and in most cases staff have been repurposed and retrained to engage in the disease detective work that is critical to every attempt to contain this virus before it takes more Geauga County lives. That has a consequence relative to the many programs and services otherwise provided by my team. Almost a month ago I suspended the vast majority of our programs in order to prepare for our response to an increasing number of cases of COVID-19. At the time I am writing this we have more than 40 cases and each of those cases can have dozens of contacts to be quarantined. We contact all of them and monitor their progress through isolation and quarantine periods that last for weeks. By the time you read this, it is likely the number of cases will be more than 50.

As a result of our concentrated efforts, many of you are experiencing consequences. Most notably, this interruption of service has been making things difficult for those of you who are connected in some way by our septic inspection programs. We are currently only responding to emergency issues that immediately threaten the health of the public. We have been working to identify strategies where they are possible. For example, there will be no health district penalties associated with delays of inspections that would have otherwise been completed from the time we suspended programming until the time we resume business as usual. However, there are some circumstances over which we have no control. While we have postponed our health district requirements, it will still be up to others to take complementary action to allow for your business to resume.

We have no authority over lenders who insist on having septic replacement costs put into escrow for property sales transactions. That is their policy, not ours. Our current inability to do point of sale inspections at the time of property transfer is only an issue because of the policy of the lending institution. We are not requiring a point of sale inspection be done at the time of transfer. The inspections will resume when the inspectors are no longer part of the COVID-19 response team. Similarly, requirements of other Geauga County Departments for inspections are within the decision scope of those departments, not mine at public health. We will conduct those evaluations and inspections as soon as the capacity to do so returns. We do not oppose the modifications others may make to their own requirements. All inspections will be conducted as soon as possible. We appreciate your patience and courtesy as we continue the fight against COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Tom Quade
Geauga County Health Commissioner