

Dear BOS,

I'm increasingly concerned about how our County will look in a few months due to the COVID shut-down. We are a "small business" county. Most, as you know, are marginal and will not survive this shut-down much longer. The County's future economic viability and "quality of life" are unquestionably at stake. This is a crisis needing as much attention as the health consequences of COVID. I fear that isn't happening.

I ask the Board to *immediately* take whatever steps it can to allow as many small businesses as possible to reopen. We all understand and accept the need for stringent health precautions to minimize transmission (and future sicknesses and deaths). However a wiser cost-risk-benefit approach could be taken that won't meaningfully affect health precautions, but which would help the County's economy from going into free-fall.

I offer the following specific suggestions:

1) Saving "Quality of Life" businesses: Although the County can't officially create policies the State doesn't allow, the list of "essential business" seems sometimes broadly enough written that some additional small businesses might reopen and survive....creating an "Essential-for-the-future businesses" category.

I'm especially concerned with unique business such as Ft Bragg's "Sew n Sew," a fabric store serving hundreds of sewing customers. I know its econmic condition is fragile...a few more weeks of closure will surely doom it.

The Coast community *needs* this business in the future. Please direct the Public Health Director to find a way to get this business reclassified as "essential." Where there's a will there's a way. In the Apr 10 revised order, Sew n Sew can qualify under allowed businesses, "xii" Home improvement (e.g. fabrics sold for furniture). The Apr 10 order contains a large number of businesses allowed to operate – some very broadly defined. Please push to find whatever loophole, whatever broad definition is available to get Sew n Sew and other equally important "quality of life" businesses to reopen -- for the community's longterm benefit.

I believe a very safe health protocol (even more stringent perhaps than what is happening in Safeway, which is open) could easily be created. Instructions at the door requiring safe-distancing, gloves (even) required of all customers, only so many allowed in at a time, disinfecting common surfaces, etc. I.E., have our Public Health Director create a "If you do these things....you can reopen" set of requirements.

2) Other essential-in-the-future businesses throughout the county: Sew n Sew is only one example. Therefore have the City Administrator and/or City Council in FB, Willits, and Ukiah compile a list of similar businesses in each area that significantly contribute to the community's "quality of life" ...that should they fail, a significant economic and social-value loss would ensue. Do this as fast as possible, so they can get cleared by the Public Health Director and reopened next week (before they permanently close).

3) Don't count on the bailout: Although the federal bailout package *should* be helpful, I'm hearing that it is slow, difficult, and inapplicable for many small businesses. When (and for too many, if) that help arrives it may very well be too late.

4) A wiser PHD approach: Our current Public Health Director doesn't seem to be fully appreciative of the huge economic, psychological, and social fabric consequences this pandemic is creating. As she is supposedly leaving anyway, can that be expedited (to immediately -?). If not, may I request the BOS perform a "performance review" so her attitudes and policies can be explored and perhaps changed.

5) Time is of the essence!! BOS must move quickly, immediately, full-court press to get these so-very-important-to-the-community businesses reopened. They won't last long otherwise.

Sincerely,

Rick Childs