

Opinion | Chelan Douglas Regional Port Authority: Coronavirus — A health and economic vitality concern

Chelan Douglas Regional Port Authority directors

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So why is the Chelan Douglas Regional Port Authority writing an op-ed article on the coronavirus?
Good question.

The Regional Port is the lead economic development agency in Chelan and Douglas Counties. Its focus is to enhance the economic vitality of the region. Our top priority is to support and retain existing businesses in Chelan and Douglas Counties.

The purpose of this op-ed is to offer some perspective. The coronavirus is not only a health risk, it is a virus that could impact the economic health of our business community.

The Regional Port supports the recommendations from the Washington State Department of Health and our local health care agencies. Nothing is more important than following the advice of our health care experts in combating the coronavirus.

The unfortunate consequences of the coronavirus are readily apparent in the fewer cars appearing in the parking lots of our stores and restaurants. Many of our businesses are experiencing a downturn in sales. We are concerned the coronavirus may not only be a serious health issue, but perhaps an economic survival issue for some of our small businesses.

What can we do collectively to make a difference? Please consider going on-line to your favorite store and/or restaurant in the greater Wenatchee Valley and purchase a gift card. You can use the gift card later in the year when the coronavirus is hopefully behind us, while supporting local business operations in the present.

If you are not in the medically vulnerable category, consider calling your favorite local restaurant. Ask them if they are offering “to go” meals. See about utilizing one of the many delivery options in the area, such as Dashing Drivers, Door Dash, or Ubereats. Meals can be ordered on-line or via an app on your cell phone. Area restaurants still get your business and you can enjoy your favorite food from the comfort of your home. Do you have visitors or relatives coming to town later in the year? Consider purchasing a gift card now to one of the local hotels or area attractions.

Did your non-profit event get canceled? How about donating the value of the ticket in lieu of requesting a refund.

If each household in Chelan and Douglas counties, with the economic means, reaches out to a local business with a purchase, it will make a difference.

On another front, the Regional Port is actively engaged in working with federal and state agencies to secure resources for small businesses. We are closely tracking proposed federal legislation that would provide direct grants for eligible small businesses to help cover the cost of lost revenues. Another federal proposal would capitalize a local fund to provide low-interest loans to businesses of all sizes, help rebuild impacted industries such as tourism and manufacturing supply chains. It is too early to tell which proposals have the best chance of receiving Congressional approval. What we can say is the Regional Port will fight for our share of the resources if and when legislation gets approved.

In conclusion, some readers may question why the Regional Port is interjecting capitalism at a time when we are facing a serious health threat. The Regional Port continues to believe there is no higher priority than following the recommendations of our health care community. The health of our citizens is without question the top priority. However, our community can prioritize our response to the coronavirus at the same time we reach out to our most vulnerable small businesses. We can do both. We should do both.

At some point the coronavirus will be in our past. What we do not know is will our favorite store and/or restaurant be in business. That is yet to be decided. The greater Wenatchee Valley has a reputation of coming together during difficult times. Please join the Regional Port in finding opportunities to support our local businesses during the coronavirus business downturn.

The Chelan Douglas Regional Port Authority is governed by six elected board directors: Rory Turner, Alan Loeb sack, JC Baldwin, Mark Spurgeon, Donn Etherington, and Jim Huffman. To learn more about the Regional Port visit www.cdrpa.org. Local businesses/organizations that have questions, please reach out to info@cdrpa.org.