



Portage County Treasurer's Office
Brad Cromes, Treasurer

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 returning elements of our office's operations on a limited basis. Changes are highlighted below.

In most cases, public interactions will take place by appointment only. Please see below for additional detail, and check our website, co.portage.oh.us/treasurer-brad-cromes-cgfm, or call us at 330-297-3586 for more information.

Forward – 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 be 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 Portage 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, 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?

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** and until further notice:

Tax Payments. During this period, the Treasurer's Office will not accept in-person tax payments. Payments by mail will continue to be processed, and taxpayers are encouraged to utilize online and phone payment options available at co.portage.oh.us/treasurers-office/pages/payment-options, and checks, cashier's checks or money orders where necessary. Taxpayers are also encouraged to use the drop box located outside the Portage County Administration Building.

Payment Receipts. Proof of payment remains available. Taxpayers wishing to receive payment verification must provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope to us for that purpose along with payment.

Payment Plans. New delinquent tax payment plans will be offered during this time by appointment only. Please call us at 330-297-2243 to schedule your appointment. Taxpayers on existing delinquent tax payment plans may continue to make payments, consistent with the recommendation above.

Foreclosures. During this period, the Treasurer's Office is suspending further foreclosure action on occupied structures (owner-occupied/rentals). Foreclosure actions on unoccupied/ unimproved properties will continue.

Pay-Ins. In the interest of minimizing public contact, and after consultation with the Prosecutor's Office as to legal requirements, the Treasurer's Office will only accept pay-ins by cash and check from other County offices and departments once per week during this period. Offices should coordinate with the Treasurer's Office staff as to when to make pay-ins of that variety. Electronic pay-ins will continue as normal.

Office Operations. The Treasurer's Office is in close communication with our banking partners and the County's information technology professionals to ensure continuity of operations for all critical business processes. This includes building the capacity, where necessary, for staff to work from home. We will continue efforts in this regard until such time as they are no longer deemed necessary.

Taxpayers and others interacting with the office must wear masks for their own safety and the safety of Treasurer's Office employees for the duration of their transaction. Refusal to properly use a mask will terminate a transaction.

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

Office Staffing. During this period, only staff required for the completion of critical business processes – including the Chief Deputy Treasurer, Office Manager, Accounts Coordinator and Cashier I - will be on site. All other staff will be working from home and monitoring office communication channels remotely. 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 Portage County 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 Portage County personnel policies.

These changes to Treasurer's Office processes and procedures are effective beginning on **Monday, June 1, 2020**, and will run until further notice. Our office will remain in touch with County public health personnel and other relevant stakeholders, and will adjust this effective period and/or elements of the plan as necessary.

Where can I find additional information about these changes?

Taxpayers and other stakeholders are encouraged to monitor the Treasurer's Office Facebook Page (www.facebook.com/PortageTreasurer) and website (co.portage.oh.us/treasurer-brad-cromes-cgfm) for updates. Additional information is also available by phone at 330-297-3586 during regular business hours, Monday – Friday, 8am – 4:30pm.

Conclusion.

The Treasurer's Office takes our duty to serve and protect the public very seriously. We believe the changes outlined above 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, and look forward to the return of normal business operations as soon as possible.