

TISPC Legislative Update
April 29, 2020

The 2020 legislative short session began on April 28 for legislators to pass bills in response to COVID-19, including legislation to help small businesses, taxpayers, local governments, the unemployed, and health care providers. The legislative building is closed to the public, limiting access legislators, staff, and the media for social distancing precautions.

During the interim, lawmakers in both the North Carolina Senate and House worked on developing legislative packages in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of the House Select Committee on COVID-19 learned how the virus is impacting industries across the state. The committee's four working groups – Health Care, Education, Economic Support, and Continuity of State Operations – met remotely, hearing presentations from entities and associations from each group's respective sector. *All of the documents and presentations from the Committee meetings are available online. To access these resources, click [here](#).*

Now that session has begun, legislators are meeting in a new way, combining both in-person and virtual meeting practices. Each chamber is holding committee meetings, vetting appropriations and policy bills. The bills being considered solely address COVID-19 related issues. Lawmakers will, however, likely return again mid-late summer to work on additional budget and policy adjustments, including other appropriations in response to COVID-19.

Three budget packages have been proposed, including the following funding for local governments:

- The Governor's COVID-19 [budget proposal](#) includes \$300 million to assist local governments, distributed based partially on population and partially on acute need.
- The House's budget proposal, [HB 1038: Omnibus COVID-19 Response Funds](#), provides \$350,000,000 to the Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM) to allocation to counties ineligible to receive direct funding from the federal Coronavirus Relief Fund in the CARES Act. The criteria that must be met is outlined on page 15 of [the bill](#).
- The Senate's budget includes appropriations for local governments. [SB 704: COVID-19 Recovery Act](#) creates a Local Government Coronavirus Relief Reserve to maintain certain federal funds that are eligible to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak in North Carolina on the revenue of local government. The bill originally appropriated up to \$300,000,000 to be used for local governments that experience a revenue shortfall and if the CARES Act is amended to allow the use of federal funds for that purpose (page 3 of bill). However, Senator Brown's amendment that passed in committee on Wednesday afternoon changes the way the funds are allocated to local governments ([see page 1](#)) in order to ensure smaller counties get at least \$100,000.

SB 704 also includes a requirement for local governments to submit a statement of financial information concerning the impact of COVID-19 on the finances of the unit or public authority semiannual reports of financial information (full details on [page 34 of bill](#)).

On March 27, 2020, Governor Cooper issued [Executive Order 121](#), which included a stay at home order. On April 23, [Executive Order 135](#) was issued to extend the stay at home order until May 8, among other restrictions. None of Governor Cooper's executive orders include prohibitions on vacation rentals. Governor Cooper has not taken a policy stance on beach rentals, instead giving local governments the purview to make necessary decisions for vacation rentals and beach access. Attached is a spreadsheet outlining how surrounding communities are managing opening beaches, short term rentals, and the community while considering various criteria.

Key legislators and staff have indicated plans to reconvene again this summer to develop a phase II budget package. If legislation is needed to address specific COVID-19 impacts on your community, such as temporary flexibility for occupancy tax, we will work with legislators to have this included in the next legislative package. The sooner we can start educating legislators and staff on such issues, the better.

Beach Name	Beach Access Points	Public Parking Lots	Public Restrooms	Activities Allowed/Restrictions (all include social distancing and no large crowds)	Short-Term Property Rentals	Other notes
Atlantic Beach	Open (4/30)	Certain lots open/limited capacity (4/30)	Closed		Ban to be lifted May 8	Expecting full public parking and lifeguard services to resume May 15; full beach access by Memorial Day weekend
Carolina Beach	Open for foot traffic	Closed	Closed	Non-stationary exercise only (no beach equipment allowed)	Banned Until May 8	
Emerald Isle	Closed to visitors; Open to residents and property owners	Closed; planning to open some areas on May 9	Closed	Swimming, surfing, kiting kayaking, fishing, walking, jogging, sitting on beach	Mandatory restriction on short term rentals through May 8, 2020	
Kure Beach	Open	Closed	Closed	Non-stationary exercise	Banned Until May 8	
Myrtle Beach	Open	Open	TBD		TBD - meeting 4/30 to decide	
North Myrtle Beach	Open	Open	TBD		Lifting short-term rental restriction 5/1, with exception from visitors from high-COVID areas	
North Topsail Beach	Open for foot traffic	Closed	Closed		Banned until May 8	
Ocean Isle Beach	Open (4/30)	Open (4/30)	Closed	Limiting crowds to 10 or less, mandating social distancing	Lifting short-term rental restriction 4/30	
Surf City	Open	Closed	Closed		Banned until May 15	
Topsail Beach	Open	Closed	Closed		Banned until May 14	
Wrightsville Beach	Open to residents only	Closed to general public	Closed	Non-stationary exercise (limited to 10 ppl or less)	Banned Until May 8	