

How South Florida will spend more than \$600 million in federal coronavirus aid



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HUNDREDS OF CARS LINED UP OVER FIVE MILES AND WAITED MORE THAN THREE HOURS TO GET A BAG OF FREE GROCERIES AT THE CORONAVIRUS FOOD DISTRIBUTION DRIVE IN MIRAMAR ON APRIL 11. (WAYNE K. ROUSTAN)

South Florida has started piecing together how it'll spend hundreds of millions of dollars in federal aid in the fight against the coronavirus crisis.

Food distribution, an isolation program to help families separate from sick members in their home and coronavirus testing are just a few of the ways Broward County plans to spend \$340.7 million. Palm Beach County leaders recently announced plans to use their \$261 million for reusable face masks and to help shuttered businesses reopen.

Broward County already started an [isolation program to help families separate](#) from sick members in the household by putting them up at hotels. And family members left behind would get help, too, with food assistance, and utility and water bill payments.

It'll spend money for portable sinks for the homeless to be able to wash up. The county is also spending money on food distribution and the federal funds will help cover costs associated with setting up virtual commission meetings.

The county also spent \$155,000 of the money for all but two of the commissioners' constituents on mailers reminding people to wash their hands and complete their Census. The plan now is for the county to keep about \$240.7 million and give \$100 million to the cities.

The county will consider giving the Broward Clerk of Courts \$9.5 million to meet their payroll, as well as portable computers and face masks. Clerk of Courts Brenda Forman asked the county for the funds, saying in a memo to County Administrator Bertha Henry that other clerks' offices across Florida received money from their counties.

She said she was in need of the funding because the Florida Clerks of Court Operations Corporation, which was created to support the Clerks of Court in all 67 counties with their court-related budget activities, would have budget cuts.

County Commissioner Lamar Fisher pushed for the cities across Broward to share in the windfall.

"It's the right thing to do," he said. "They are going through the same things the county is going through."

Lauderhill Mayor Ken Thurston said his city has had to spend an unanticipated \$2 million for police and fire overtime, and masks that were handed out at nursing homes, at the time they are seeing a decrease in city revenues from business licenses and permits.

The county will warn all cities that if they misspend anything they'll be on the hook to pay it back. The county also still must decide if the cities will only be reimbursed for the money they have already spent, or given a check for expenses that haven't yet happened.

"No doubt certain cities have had more expenses than others," Thurston said. "All cities have not been impacted the same way."

That's why Hollywood Commissioner Traci Callari, as president of the Broward League of Cities, organized a task force of mayors and commissioners to come up with a proposal to Henry of who should get what based on need as equitably as possible. A plan is expected to be submitted early this week.

The fallout was “unexpected and there comes costs with that,” she said. “All cities took a hit.”

Weston Mayor Daniel Stermer said all the cities are deserving and had to dip into their pockets to pay for the COVID-19 fallout.

Weston spent money on masks, gloves and gowns for its first responders, for example, and even though the city contracts with the Broward Sheriff’s Office “you can’t tell Fire-Rescue to please wait,” Stermer said. Other costs were for scrubbing down playgrounds before they were closed outright, and setting staff up to work remotely.

In Palm Beach County, officials are not allocating money to its cities, but recently announced it will use \$60 million of its \$261 million allotment to help businesses reopen.

The county received 4,988 applications for the program. The county is also planning on using its share to assist residents with emergency mortgage, rental and utility assistance; food distribution; and coronavirus and antibody testing.

An estimated \$2.5 million will also be spent to send two reusable face [masks to every household](#) — about 660,000 homes — in the county.

Details about how Miami-Dade County will spend its portion of relief money were not immediately available.

<https://www.sun-sentinel.com/coronavirus/fl-ne-broward-cities-coronavirus-relief-20200630-ntex4ienbjb3pc6oukz76i62e4-story.html>