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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 6, 2020

County governments across the State are facing unprecedented challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Governor Evers' Emergency Order #12 (Safer at Home Order) permits local governments to hold in-person meetings. Teleconference and videoconference meetings are also permitted. Regardless of the way in which the meeting is conducted, the County Board of Supervisors (the "County") is still required to follow Wisconsin's open meetings laws. Open meetings laws grant the public the right to observe County meetings but does not grant the public the right to public comment or direct participation at such meetings (there are exceptions, e.g., zoning petitions).

Historically, the County has permitted, and encouraged, public comment at its meetings despite there being no lawful authority requiring the County to do so. However, due to these emergency times, the County is not able to accommodate this practice like it has in the past.

While the County is legally permitted to conduct its meetings in person, the County strives to limit such in-person meetings and to conduct such meetings only when it is absolutely necessary to the effective operation of our local government. When this occurs, the County will continue to offer all interested parties—supervisors, County employees and the public—the option of attending remotely. Whenever the County holds any meeting with the use of telephonic or video participation by any of its members, the County will continue to provide Notice to the public as to how to remotely access the meeting. The County will continue to retain record of the completed meetings, as well.

The County Board of Supervisors believes we should be exemplary in this time and conduct local government business with mindfulness toward the safety and wellbeing of our residents. The County Board of Supervisors will continue to meet all essential functions of our local government, while complying with open meetings laws, and always with awareness of our responsibility to our residents.