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Cars crowded the entrance to Lucky Pearl Internet Café in Palatka on Tuesday, but Putnam County officials said there wasn't anything they could do to close the cafés during the coronavirus pandemic.

Bostwick resident Ivette Reyes raised the issue of internet gambling cafés during Tuesday morning's Board of County Commissioners meeting.

The issue was discussed as the county reported 60 new coronavirus cases Tuesday. The number of positive tests was the most reported in a single day in the county and pushed the total number of cases since the outbreak began in March to 835, according to the Department of Health in Putnam County.

Twenty-six of the cases reported Tuesday were from Crescent City and 17 were from Palatka. Sixty-four county residents have required hospitalization during the pandemic and there have been seven virus-related deaths.

Florida broke its one-day record for coronavirus deaths Tuesday with 132. Overall, the state has recorded nearly 292,000 cases and 4,513 deaths since March 1.

"Why are we allowing for the internet cafés to remain open when they are clearly packing people in there with no social distancing?" Reyes asked in a public comment email during Tuesday's meeting.

Board Chairman Terry Turner said he emailed Reyes and said the only legal way the cafés could be shut down during the virus pandemic is if they broke the 50% capacity guidelines.

Sheriff Gator DeLoach said if law enforcement officials were to enforce the capacity guidelines, it would have to be done at every business.

"We cannot just single out internet cafés," DeLoach said. "We are continuing a conversation with (County Administrator Terry Suggs) and with (County Attorney Rich Komando) and with my legal counsel here at the sheriff's office to see if we can come up with some sort of an amicable resolution."

Signs on the door of Paradise Internet Café in East Palatka advise customers to social distance, wear a mandatory face mask and limit building capacity to 25 people.

"If you are inside the building, you must be wearing a face mask," the sign read. "If you don't have a face mask, we will provide you one until we run out."

The Palatka City Commission earlier this month mandated face coverings at indoor businesses.

The county has yet to mandate face coverings. Although Lucky Pearl does not have any signs

regarding virus precautions on the door, people entered the building Tuesday wearing masks. An employee said they are enforcing social distancing and face masks.

“Absolutely,” said an employee who identified themselves as Lana and hung up when asked to provide a last name.

Several calls from the Palatka Daily News went unanswered.

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