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From the Baltimore Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/baltimore/news/2020/05/01/chesapeake-real-estate-group-awaits-verdict-on-may.html>

Chesapeake Real Estate Group awaits verdict on May rent payments

May 1, 2020, 7:30am EDT

Matt Laraway says the coming four weeks will help map a future course for some industrial and office tenants he oversees.

April was strong, with rent paid for 87% — a total of 4.5 million square feet — of space leased or managed by Chesapeake Real Estate Group.

May will be another story, though.

The Hanover-based company's large tenants include retailer Best Buy, which has limited its retail stores to curbside pickup only and suspended in-home delivery, installation and repair services amid the novel coronavirus crisis. Other tenants have scaled back or closed their operations altogether.

"That will be a lot more telling," he said, noting several tenants have already sought to discuss cash flow woes that will impact their ability to pay rent.

Many other tenants across the state and U.S. share that predicament. Laraway says there's potential for a chain reaction that will start with struggling tenants and end with lenders or investors demanding their mortgage payments anyway.

The whiplash has become part of the new normal in commercial real estate. Laraway says the key to getting by is communication.

"We have made a request of them and told them what we need," Laraway said of his tenants seeking rent abatement or deferments for May, as forced closures remain in effect in Maryland.

His firm has requested spreadsheets from tenants that show financials from the same period last year, business updates pre-Covid-19 and whether the tenant has applied for federal assistance under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act. Such information will help to assess the situation on a case-by-case basis and serve as a safety net for all parties.

"We say 'we're in this together,' but we want to make sure people are proactive and we are not just taking the brunt of it," he said. "And then we're talking with our lenders. Some are open, because we have long-term relationships with them.

"We're still feeling OK, but we'd love for this thing to end sooner than later."



MAT LARAWAY

"We're still feeling OK, but we'd love for this thing to end sooner than later," says Chesapeake Real Estate Group's Matt Laraway.

Location: Hanover

Year founded: 2004

Employees pre-pandemic: 11

Employees now: 11

PPP funding: Applied, but did not receive in first round

The BBJ is following eight businesses as they navigate the COVID-19 pandemic as part of American City Business Journals' "Small Business, Big Mission" series. See how the others are faring in our second installment [here](#), and meet the companies in the first installment [here](#).

Melody Simmons
Reporter

Baltimore Business Journal

