

Saratoga County Reopening Advisory Group Minutes
June 12, 2020 – 3:00 p.m.

Chairman Lawler called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance in person and on the phone.

Mr. Lawler said that Mr. Hellwig will be joining the meeting later as Mr. Hellwig is currently participating in an all hands Control Room call that includes all of the Control Rooms in NYS.

Ms. Duncan gave a Public Health Update. Ms. Duncan said that things have slowed down immensely. We are up to 514 positive cases and down to only two hospitalizations. The patients are stable and will probably be going home soon. Deaths remain at 17. 17,918 tests have been processed so far. This figure includes antibody tests and duplicate tests. Nursing home employees were being tested twice a week, this week the requirement has been dropped back to once a week. Ms. Duncan said that they have reduced their staffing and many of the Public Health staff have gone back to their offices. They can be called back if needed in the event of a surge. Ms. Duncan said that there was no spike after Memorial day. Ms. Duncan said that contract tracing is being reported to the state. Ms. Duncan said that they developed their own system, have their own spreadsheets, and are very thorough. Ms. Duncan said that they did not need the State's software and said that there are still problems with this software. Ms. Duncan said that they tracked down every single contact and put everyone into quarantine. Ms. Duncan said that her staff did an excellent job, and because of this, they managed to keep the numbers reasonable.

Mr. Hellwig gave a control room update. Mr. Hellwig said that the biggest detail was that New York State has the lowest transmission rate in the Country right now. Yesterday there were 21 States that saw unprecedented increases in the number of positive cases, today they are up to 23. Yesterday, 14 of those States had the highest numbers they have ever seen throughout the pandemic, today that number is 15. Mr. Hellwig said that the data points to a much more controlled environment in NY. No updates were given in regard to the reopening plan. Mr. Hellwig said that the Governor was reinforcing that based on the results, the methodology that has been used has been successful in comparison to areas where there was no phased reopening. Mr. Hellwig said that the Governor recognized that it was a hardship to the business community, municipalities, and residents. Mr. Hellwig said that the Governor mentioned that Oregon was one of the States right now that has to pause their reopening as a result of the infection rate. Mr. Hellwig said that the testing results are the precursor, there is a 2 week lag between when the tests come in and when the hospitalization rates increase. Part of the responsibility of the Control Rooms across the State is to monitor this, so that diligent contract tracing can be done to get it under control before it becomes a larger problem. Mr. Hellwig said that Phase 3 is still scheduled for next Wednesday.

Mr. Shimkus said that under Phase 3, restaurants will be allowed to open indoors at 50% capacity. Mr. Shimkus thanked all of the Supervisors, villages and towns, that have stepped up quickly to help restaurants to open up outside, to allow the use of tents, sidewalks, parks, adjacent properties etc. Mr. Shimkus said that if the restaurants will be curtailed to 50% indoors all year, they will need as many seats as possible outside to make up that difference. Mr.

Shimkus said that in talking with restaurants, they will make it through the summer, but will not make enough money with only 50% inside during July and August in order to survive through the winter. Mr. Shimkus said that the SLA is considering whether to allow entertainment to go outside also, without a permit. This would also help the entertainers that have not been able to perform since March. Mr. Hellwig said that this was brought up yesterday and no answer was provided. Mr. Hellwig said that there was one clarification, that in order for businesses to have entertainment, it had to be already approved under their licenses and not something they add as part of the reopening.

Mr. Shimkus said that he has been hearing a lot from fitness facilities, which are in phase 4. A lot of them have taken advantage of groups of 10 being able to be outside, socially distanced.

Mr. Zurlo said that from June 1 to the present date, they have taken in 25 complaints to the NY Pause website and through the command center. Most complaints are people commenting and venting that they should be in Phase 4 instead of Phase 2. Other complaints are regarding businesses opening early, complaints regarding gyms and people being inside gyms instead of outside. Another area of complaints is nail salons already opening. The remainder of complaints are regarding people not wearing masks. They got several complaints about wait staff not wearing masks when serving people outdoors, and people not wearing masks in stores. Mr. Zurlo said that they address each complaint and have not had to re-visit any of the establishments.

Mr. Lawler said that last week they had a suggestion from Supervisors Veitch and Kinowski regarding looking at the PPE needs of small businesses, and what, if any role, the committee may play in this. Mr. Kinowski said that they discussed it a little bit after the last meeting. Mr. Kinowski said that he followed up with his staff also and had his secretary research where PPE, mainly masks, could be purchased. Mr. Kinowski said that the logistics are getting very difficult. The Town of Stillwater has been purchasing some in quantities of 1000's and the last order was shorted to 500 and could be at least 3-4 weeks before the order could be fulfilled. Mr. Kinowski said that they are passing these masks out to local businesses and also to people at Brown's Beach. Mr. Kinowski said that he spoke with Carl Zeilman who said that he could also pursue avenues for supplies. Mr. Kinowski said that he will continue to pursue and bring it back at the next meeting. Mr. Veitch said that they have not really gotten together since the last meeting and said that Mr. Kinowski has done a lot of research over the past week. Mr. Veitch said that at this point they will stay in touch with Carl Zeilman and go from there. Mr. Lawler asked Mr. Shimkus if he could work with Mr. Veitch and Mr. Kinowski so that they can get an idea of what is needed from the small business perspective. Mr. Kinowski said that another channel they could pursue would be the military. Mr. Shimkus said that Mr. McMahon from the City Center has taken the lead on procuring the supplies for the small business kits that are being distributed. Mr. Shimkus said that they have also been fortunate with local businesses such as Death Wish Coffee, Momentive, and UniFirst, who have donated approximately 25K masks for the kits. National Grid and the City also donated cloth masks. Mr. Veitch said that he will reach out to Mr. McMahon. Mr. Lawler suggested that they could also request help from Congresswoman Stefanik for federal sources. Mr. Dake said that their businesses have been open as an essential business, their hard costs of materials purchased for PPE, including Plexiglas, stickers, etc. they have spent \$1.1M through the end of last month, which translates to a little over \$3K per store. This is the type of cost that small businesses in the communities are facing, and why it is so important to provide a level of support.

Mr. Rose and Mr. Mauro displayed the current website and gave an overview of the most recent updates and changes. The website can be found at www.saratogacountyny.gov/county-reopening. The format has not changed, and updates are being added. The website has had 23,673 hits since it was created, 646 views just today. Mr. Lawler thanked the Chamber and all of the other partners for their promotion of the website. Mr. Lawler said that any suggestions for content etc. are welcome. Once Phase 3 happens, there will be a lot of revisions made.

Mr. Lawler said that the groups recommendation for the promotion and advertising plan was presented at the Economic Development Committee meeting this past Wednesday. The plan was passed and approved by both the Economic Development Committee and the Law and Finance Committee. The proposal to fund the promotional campaign in the amount of \$50K will now move to the full Board on Tuesday. Mr. Shimkus has agreed to provide another presentation of the advertising plan. Mr. Lawler requested that Mr. Mauro and Mr. Rose also be present to briefly walk through the website so that people can see the amount of work that has already gone into this. Mr. Lawler is hoping that the item will pass. Mr. Lawler said that the small business community absolutely needs this. Without a strong summer some of these businesses will not be here as the winter season approaches, which will be a very serious problem for Saratoga County, the taxpayers, business community, and residents. Mr. Richardson said that they have been gradually filling empty spots in Mechanicville for the past 14 years and it would be a shame to lose a lot of these spots not only due to the pandemic, but because we did not help them out. Mr. Lawler said that in the older smaller communities, the businesses struggle in good times. Mr. Richardson said that he has been thanked by several small businesses for the buckets that were distributed by him and Mr. Shimkus. Mr. Shimkus said that Yankee Distillery donated approximately 500 ½ gals of hand sanitizer for the kits. They will be producing more, and businesses can purchase additional supplies from this local business as needed.

Mr. Lawler asked the group to think about what else the group can do to help. Mr. Pemrick suggested putting this exact question on the website. Mr. Kinowski suggested that people donating masks could promote their businesses with masks that have their logos. Mr. Dake said that some people have been going to work throughout this pandemic, others are just beginning to come back to work. The cavalier nature of those who are used to being back at work can cause fear for those that are now only coming back out. Each phase that reopens, there is a new population that is just emerging, and it's important to have a level of sensitivity for these new people. This is something to keep in mind as we think about next steps. Ms. Duncan said that she has been thinking about the successful countries. They have been using famous people to deliver the message and suggested that Saratoga County includes this, emphasizing the safety. Ms. Duncan said that it will be a while before a vaccine is ready and we cannot relax. They are also getting a lot more resistance from people that need to be quarantined. Positive messaging on how we can safely open up is crucial. Mr. Lawler asked Mr. Shimkus if we could possibly make a video of businesses that are safely opening up, a short visual that can be put on the website. A video of what businesses should look like to reopen safely. Mr. Shimkus said that they did a social media contest for businesses, videos posted using hashtags on how they are reopening safely. A number of businesses have done it and he will check with his staff to see what they have so far and will provide an update at the next meeting. Mr. Shimkus suggested that perhaps a proclamation or citation from the committee could be presented to businesses that are taking the right steps.

Mr. Lawler said that he will make the discussion on how the committee can help businesses a standing item on future meeting agendas. Mr. Lawler said that as we move forward and further into the reopening, we will be hearing more from people in the business community who may have ideas of their own, and this can be a place where those ideas can find traction and hopefully get support. Mr. Lawler said that he appreciates that Mr. Hellwig is taking questions every day, either via the web site or the Chamber of Commerce, and bringing those issues immediately in the control room. Mr. Lawler said that the business community is being very well advocated for within the control room, and has a direct link to the State government that is setting the policies and creating the guidelines. Mr. Veitch thanked Mr. Hellwig for the quick turnaround in answers to questions that he has brought forward for businesses and not for profits. Responses have been provided within 24 hours.

It was decided that the group would continue to meet weekly at this point. The next meeting was scheduled for Friday June 19, 2020 at 3pm.

Mr. Shimkus distributed a handout regarding the Saratoga County Ribbon Cutting, the handout with details is attached to these minutes.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board



Reopening Saratoga County Ribbon Cutting

“The largest ribbon cutting ever held in Saratoga County”

Friday, June 19, 2020, at 11:00 a.m.

How this will work:

1. Each Supervisor and City or Village Mayor will receive a Reopening Saratoga County Ribbon Cutting kit.
2. Each kit will contain a 25 foot ribbon that has the Stronger Together Saratoga County logo above on it. Plus, each community will get two lawn signs that will feature the Stronger Together logo with your City, Town or Village name on it. Perhaps right outside a small business that recently reopened.
3. We'd like each community leader to pick a place in your community where you can host your local ribbon cutting on Friday, June 19, at 11:00 a.m. This is a rain or shine event.
4. Please let Denise Romeo, the Saratoga County Chamber's Executive Vice President, know the exact location you plan to host your ribbon cutting as soon as possible. You can reach her by phone at the Chamber's Clifton Park office at 518-584-3255 or via email at dromeo@saratoga.org.
5. The Saratoga County Chamber and its partner organizations will be sending a staff member or volunteer to all of these locations to take photos of your ribbon cutting.
6. The Chamber is establishing a Reopening Saratoga County Ribbon Cutting event on Facebook where it will post the locations of all local ribbon cuttings so that local businesses can be notified.
7. This FB event page will also be used to remind those who attend to wear a mask when they are not able to social distance for the photo.
8. All photos from these local ribbon cuttings will be shared on this FB event page and everyone who attends will be asked to tag themselves in their photo.
9. Those who attend can take and post their own photos as well.
10. The goal is to have every City, Town, and Village in Saratoga County declare it is reopened in Phase 3 all at once on the same time and same day.