

Saratoga County Reopening Advisory Group Minutes
July 22, 2020 – 3:00 p.m.

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

Mr. Hellwig gave a control room update. Mr. Hellwig said that there is still no guidance or approval for gyms/fitness centers. Nursing home visits were approved and guidance was sent out on July 10th. There was also guidance issued on July 13th to schools as they plan to reopen, whether the instruction is going to occur remotely, in person or a combination of both. The schools must have their plans submitted by July 31st. There was a ruling by a Federal Judge to increase the size of congregate worship for religious gatherings. The original limit was 33% and has now increased to 50%. There is no limit on outdoor gatherings for ceremonies such as weddings and funerals. On July 17th there was guidance released on the requirement that restaurants and businesses with licenses to sell alcohol must serve food with beverages. More information on this can be found on the reopening website. Mr. Hellwig said that we are now up to 31 states that on the list of those with quarantine requirements.

Mr. Hellwig said that the number for public gatherings is still 50. Mr. Shimkus questioned if this would apply to large ballrooms. Mr. Hellwig said that wedding parties are being held in restaurant settings which allows for additional guests, it sounds like additional steps will be taken to address this. Mr. Shimkus asked if there was any update on the Casinos opening. Mr. Hellwig said that there is nothing yet. On today's call they discussed entertainment, gyms, and driving schools. There are many people waiting to take their driving test but cannot do so without the 5 hour course.

Ms. Duncan gave an update from Public Health. There are currently 670 positive cases, an additional 11 came in today. There are 3 people in the hospital with one on a ventilator and two stable. 38,932 tests have been conducted to date. Ms. Duncan said that historically they have been having some issues with getting test results back. This is varying right now. Some labs take up to 9-10 days. Ms. Duncan said that the SUNY Albany drive through has a quick turnaround of 2 days. Wellnow in Clifton Park is 2-3 days turnaround.

Ms. Duncan said that they saw an uptick as a result of recent sporting events. There were situations where one positive can yield up to 60-80 contacts. Ms. Duncan said it's important for coaches to wear masks all the time and players to only be allowed to remove masks while they are playing. Unfortunately the guidelines are not being followed.

Ms. Duncan said that schools are in the process of planning for their return. Ms. Duncan said that they participated in a call with all of the administrators in the Northern School districts to figure out how things will roll out. The plans must be submitted by the end of this month to NYS. There are several open questions at this point and research that needs to be done on how other countries have done things successfully. Children up to ages 10-11, don't seem to be spreading the disease as readily as high school age children. Elementary age schoolchildren would be the age that could possibly come back to school if they are spaced apart and care is taken with how the classroom is run. Ms. Duncan said that each district and school is different. Transportation will be an issue also.

Ms. Duncan said that they have expanded the Emergency reserve corps from 90 to 160 pandemic volunteers and they will be working on getting everyone trained. They are looking toward the Fall

to establish point of dispensing areas for flu shot administration, also practicing for when the vaccine comes. Ms. Duncan said that there is a high level of flu patients that go into the hospital and potential COVID hospital surge capacity can be protected by people getting the flu vaccine. They are going to do a flu vaccine promotion campaign. They want to hit the vulnerable populations, those with chronic diseases especially, to make sure that they don't get their flu shot too early in the season, as it won't protect them in the height of flu season in February. It is advisable for them to hold off until later in the fall. Ms. Duncan said that pharmacists will begin to promote the flu vaccine shortly. They will have PODs set up, they are considering one in the Mental Health clinic to take care of County employees and encourage all to get the vaccine. Ms. Duncan said that they are in the process of getting the agreement with Saratoga Hospital for the Rheonix machine for COVID testing. The cost of purchasing the machine will be covered by grant funds. The machine will be set up at Malta Medical Emergent Care. Results will be available as early as 5 hours after the test.

Ms. Duncan gave some statistical data from Saratoga Hospital. Since the very beginning, they have had 53 unique patients in their hospital with the COVID diagnosis. Currently there are 2 patients at the hospital, one is on a med surge unit and the other is vented in ICU. They have had historically, through this pandemic, 14 patients that were vented on an average of 14 days on a vent. Their highest amount of COVID patients at one time was 19 in April. 5 patients were lost to COVID.

Ms. Duncan said that the NYS DOH has guidance out on maintaining a 90 day supply of PPE for the hospitals. They are currently doing a survey to ensure all of the hospitals will have at least a 60 day quantity on hand to come into compliance, between August 31st and September 30th.

Mr. Zurlo gave an update on enforcement. From the period of July 14th to today's date there are 87 total complaints. $\frac{3}{4}$ of the complaints are for people not wearing masks. Some complaints regarding social distancing, for example people in bars not sitting 6ft apart. Some other complaints were regarding businesses that were open, gyms. Mr. Zurlo said that there were 6 complaints about softball teams traveling out of state.

Mr. Dake said that two weeks ago they went to 100% asking for masks in their stores. The number of complaints tapered off from the initial complaints. Mr. Dake said that he has had a large number of people claim that they fall under a medical exemption but this is impossible to check and remain compliant with ADA.

Mr. Veitch said that that City PD and Council are struggling with how they can enforce and get compliance with mask wearing. Any given day on Broadway there are people not wearing masks and not social distancing. Mr. Veitch said that Supervisor Gaston has an idea that he supports along with Commissioners Madigan and Dalton. Ms. Gaston gave credit to a colleague in Minnesota where their County is doing a successful campaign called mask up Ramsey, and believes it would translate very well to Saratoga. Basically a campaign of still pictures and short videos of individuals wearing masks, and telling people for what purpose they are wearing a mask. One example is an individual who works in the medical field, who also has high risk people at home. It is a really good social media campaign, and can be used for advertising on TV. Commissioners Madigan and Dalton are very interested in doing something similar for the City and Ms. Gaston asked if the County and the Reopening group would like to work with them on developing the campaign County wide. Ms. Gaston believes it is a good way to pressure people into wearing masks without requiring enforcement off the bat. This campaign could be used with the Feel the Freedom campaign. Mr. Veitch said that this would be continuing with the PSA idea that began

with the video that was created on wearing masks. Letting people know we are wearing masks for various reasons and how important it is for everyone to do this. Ms. Gaston said that there is a difference between just having a sign saying “wear a mask” and showing faces of people who are well known in the community actually wearing the mask. The idea would be to change the way we are looking at it, instead of ordering people to wear a mask, show photos of people wearing masks to encourage others to wear masks. There was a discussion on what media the message would be put out on and who would participate. Mr. Shimkus said that he spoke recently with Dr. Robinson from Shen. who suggested that if kids are going to be required to wear masks, that we start modeling this with parents and community leaders. Mr. Shimkus said that he would be glad to meet with others regarding this initiative. Ms. Duncan suggested using a celebrity, sports player, etc. that youth admire. Mr. Veitch asked Ms. Gaston to find out from the Commissioner from Ramsey County how they are sharing their information. Mr. Shimkus said that a subcommittee can talk about this and bring results back to the next meeting. Mr. Veitch, Mr. Connolly agreed to join the subcommittee. Mr. Shimkus suggested that Mr. Lawler head the sub-committee. Ms. Duncan said that she will volunteer one of her health educators to assist. Ms. Gaston said she is happy to help in any way she can.

Mr. Kinowski said that there appears to be a glut of disposable masks available. Mr. Kinowski said that a provider in Schenectady has a couple of million in stock and willing to sell them at 20 cents each. Mr. Kinowski said that there is now time to push this through the proper committees for discussion. Mr. Kinowski said that it will be up to Emergency Management to see if they would like to purchase through the Board. Same with the CRC and the local IDA. Mr. Kinowski said that Clifton Park already did this with their own IDA. Mr. Kinowski said that this item can be eliminated now. Mr. Veitch agreed, once it gets to the vote. Mr. Veitch suggested keeping an eye on any other types of PPE that there is a lack of out there.

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. Updates are continually being added. Mr. Rose said that a lot of reorganizing was done since the last meeting. A new section for industry specific guidance was added. Links were added for the Chamber website dining options. To date the site has had 37,313 total views and 125 today.

Mr. Shimkus distributed a handout which is attached to these minutes. There is another 10 days to go for the ad campaign. The numbers on the handout reflect campaign results through 7/20. Mr. Shimkus added that 210 total TV ads were shown from 7/2 – 7/20. Mr. Shimkus said that they also decided to do some targeted email in the region. They have sent out 60K emails so far. There is another email set to go out next week.

Mr. Kinowski suggested discussions take place about pushing out social media about flu shots and also census information.

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday August 6, 2020 at 3pm.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board