

Saratoga County Reopening Advisory Group Minutes
July 9, 2020 – 3:00 p.m.

Vice Chairman Kinowski 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 has been a spike in the number of positive cases in the past two weeks; however, the hospitalizations and the number of deaths are still within an acceptable range. So far, in phase 4, there has only been two deaths, so the severity of cases is down which is allowing the region to stay on course with the reopening. As a result of the spike, the County did send out a 911 reverse call yesterday to remind residents to remember to wear masks, social distance, handwashing and sanitizing. Those steps are essential to avoiding the disruption of the reopening process. Mr. Hellwig said that the numbers based on the infections in the various phases are as follows: Phase 1 were 512, phase 2 - 259, phase 3 - 239 and based on the tracking that has occurred since the beginning of phase 4, we are on pace to hit approximately 400 this month. This has raised some concerns in the Control Room but again, based on the severity of the cases, and the hospitalizations, we are in a good position on the number of hospital and ICU beds. Mr. Hellwig said that the residents need to continue to follow the steps and guidance. Mr. Hellwig said that mall reopening has been authorized for July 10. The State DOH has issued guidance which has been placed on the website. Some of the key protocols include workforce and customer presence limited to 50% of the maximum occupancy for a particular area in the mall. Layouts need to be modified so that employees and customers are at least 6ft apart in all directions. The responsible parties, mall owners and business owners, have to prohibit use of small spaces, bathrooms, stockrooms, to one individual at a time, unless all individuals in such spaces are wearing acceptable face coverings. Responsible parties are also encouraged to use touchless payment options when available, to minimize the handling of cash, credit cards, reward cards, and use mobile devices as much as possible. For malls that have square footage in excess of 800K sq. ft., they must ensure that the building HVAC filtration systems meet the highest rated filtration that is compatible with the currently installed handling systems. The one remaining item is under sports and recreation. The guidance for gym re-openings, dance studios and places that are still waiting to reopen is supposed to be issued later today. Ms. Gaston asked Mr. Hellwig if he had heard anything regarding the Track. She said that NYRA had submitted a plan and it was her understanding that the State was being a little slow on getting back to anyone on whether reduced capacity could be allowed. Mr. Hellwig said that no additional guidance or clarification was given relative to the Racetrack in Saratoga, or any racetracks in the region at this point.

Mr. Zurlo gave an update on enforcement. For the period of June 30th to today's date there were 116 Pause complaints. 13 of the complaints were regarding gyms supposedly being open, but most of the complaints are for people not wearing masks. Mr. Zurlo said that they initially go out with an advisement. It is beginning to become a stress on his Department. There are two deputies, and with 116 complaints, they have to visit each of the businesses to make an advisement. It has doubled or tripled since the last briefing was provided by Mr. Zurlo. Mr. Zurlo said that he was on a conference call today with 55 other Sheriff's throughout NY State and this topic came up. A lot of Sheriff's offices are not honoring the NY Pause complaints any further as it is tying up their

resources. Mr. Zurlo said that many of the complaints are from the big box stores such as Walmart, Lowes, Home Depot. On top of this the Sheriff's Department served approximately 85 quarantine orders over the weekend. This is putting a stress on the Sheriff's manpower. Mr. Hellwig said that this conversation came up yesterday during a call and the consensus amongst the group is that it relies upon personal responsibility. The residents and the people out in public need to take responsibility for their actions and behaviors, and follow the guidelines to support the effort. Mr. Hellwig said that effective today, Walmart is going to a single entry and exit point, they have created health ambassador positions to help or direct customers to follow the guidelines in place. They are also bringing in security to support the staff in the event that a particular individual is difficult, or unwilling to follow what they are being asked to do. Mr. Zurlo added that along with security at Walmart, if people are not wearing masks, they will not be allowed entry to the store. Mr. Zurlo also said that some of the complaints are 2-3 days old before an advisement is made. Mr. Kinowski said that the Sheriff's Office can only do what they can do with the resources they have. To the point of personal responsibility, if businesses want customers to frequent their business, they need to ensure management is following the protocol to protect employees and customers. Mr. Kinowski said that 99% of the attendees at the recent July 4th celebrations at Brown's Beach behaved. People wore masks, families that did not stayed together and social distanced from others. Approximately 1,500 masks were handed out to those that wanted them. Mr. Dake said that they conducted an experiment in one of their districts of 14 stores in Rensselaer County where they offered masks to anyone that came in not wearing a mask. Numbers varied from 10% -30% of customers entering the stores without masks. When masks were offered the results were as follows: approximately 1/3 genuinely forgot their masks and put one on right away, 1/3 said thank you, put the mask in a bag and left with it, 1/3 outright refused to wear a mask. Mr. Dake said that there needs to be some level of education on this, and while he applauds Walmart for doing what they are doing, some of the smaller stores only have 2 staff on at a time, trying to police the door. He is in a quandary on how to deal with it. There was a Business Council call this morning. Mr. Dake said that they would be supportive of a simple fine for those not wearing masks, but trying to get the store owner to be the enforcement of this is difficult, especially in small stores. Mr. Dake said that he is not sure what the right answer is, education, or a threat, but there are still a lot of people out there, for reasons that cannot be understood, that feel wearing a mask is a terrible imposition. Mr. Kinowski said that it is also important for everyone to get their flu shots.

Ms. Duncan gave an update from Public Health. Public Health is currently in the process of trying to move to the new facility. Ms. Duncan said that they were hoping for a quiet time this summer and in truth this is not happening. From July 1st they now have over 40 new cases and hundreds of contacts with these cases. They are extremely busy due to the number of contacts these cases have. Ms. Duncan surmises that this means people are not social distancing, not wearing a mask, otherwise there would not be such a large number of contacts. Ms. Duncan said that people are being too relaxed. Ms. Duncan said that with flu season coming up, they will be doing a big push for flu vaccines as they do not want to flood our hospitals and emergency rooms with flu patients because space will be needed for a COVID surge. Ms. Duncan said that they are moving forward with the purchase of the testing machine, with quicker turnaround time, for Saratoga Hospital to use at the Malta Medical Urgent Care. Ms. Duncan said that the State is going to allow the County to pay for this machine through grant funding. Ms. Duncan said that they are also very busy with

travelers, a lot of people are bringing it to the attention to the Public Health Department informing them of people that have just returned from certain states that are not quarantining.

Ms. Duncan said that she quickly looked at all of the data, comparing Saratoga County to all of the other Capital Region Counties. Saratoga County's numbers are lower than the rest at 1.8% positive results of those that are tested, as opposed to Albany County being the highest at 3.9%.

Warren, Washington, Rensselaer and Schenectady are all around 2.4% to 2.27%. Green and Columbia are 3.5% and 3.7%.

Mr. Kinowski said that at the last meeting, they indicated that they were trying to get a feel from the Supervisors to see if it was a reasonable assumption to possibly put forth a resolution to the Board of Supervisors to purchase masks for the purposes of emergency management. Mr. Kinowski said that several Supervisors supported this. Mr. Kinowski said that he believes it is worthy of a potential resolution to introduce via Public Health. Mr. Kinowski said that he will follow up with Supervisor Lucia who Chairs Public Health. Mr. Kinowski said that there is still availability at 40 cents per disposable mask. Mr. Kinowski said that he believes that the IDA and CRC are coming back with suggestions to also purchase masks.

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. By the end of today they anticipate that the website will have 34,500 total views, and over 300 views today. Under latest news information was added regarding CDTA's route information, mall guidance, guidance regarding outdoor dining for businesses, and guidance for travelers.

Ms. Annamaria Bellantoni and Mr. Richard Snyder from the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce distributed a handout which is attached to these minutes. The handout details the regional social media and advertising campaign, and the Mind Genomics survey data. The television ads began on Monday. Mr. Snyder said that they agreed to do 2 unique social media posts per community, they are currently 12 posts in. They are promoting destinations, parks, trails, hiking and biking. They are also working a safety component into the campaign, people in posts will be wearing masks, businesses being safe, etc. All of the results from the survey are being included in the advertising campaign. Mr. Snyder said that every day there is new information as to businesses reopening. Ms. Bellantoni said that there is a link on the Chamber website indicating restaurants that are open, and those that have outdoor dining. Mr. Kinowski suggested that a link to this page be placed on the County reopening website. Mr. Snyder said that a lot of hotels were sold out on July 4th weekend. Ms. Bellantoni said that she sits on the Regional Tourism Council, a six county region encompassing the counties of Saratoga, Schenectady, Albany, Rensselaer, Washington and Fulton. They have a product that tracks visitors to the region based on their mobile phones, a trial by a company called Rove. They are seeing an uptick in all of the Counties. Regionally people are coming out, becoming more comfortable and enjoying what we have in our backyard.

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday July 22, 2020 at 3pm. Ms. Duncan said that she will have Catherine Medick report at the next meeting as Ms. Duncan will be retiring at the end of the month.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board