

Saratoga County Reopening Advisory Group Minutes  
August 6, 2020 – 3:00 p.m.

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

Mr. Hellwig gave a control room update. The 5-hour pre-licensing course that is required for individuals to schedule a road test for a driver's license was approved recently. Those courses are now being conducted remotely between the students and driving school instructors. The Center for Disease Control has revised the recommended quarantine period from 14 to 10 days. Currently the NYS DOH is reviewing that change, but the 14 day period is currently in effect in NYS. An item that has been discussed in the meetings up to today is that there has been an ongoing challenge with employees of businesses being expected to tell customers that they cannot enter without a mask. In some cases employees have been assaulted, spit on, yelled at. Larger employers like Stewarts have already provided their employees with masks to hand out to customers that forget to bring one in or don't have one. Business owners do have an obligation to provide masks to their employees but not for customers entering the business. This has been an issue across the 8 counties that make up the region. The control room members have asked the State to consider revising their rules to address this current deficiency in terms of guidance. They are still waiting on guidance regarding entertainment, fitness and some sport activities such as bowling alleys. There is also nothing in place yet for casinos. Yesterday the Governor made an announcement that NYS health insurers had to ensure that patients are not being charged for PPE in terms of fees by the health care providers. The Department of Financial Services at the State has received consumer complaints that some of the providers, particularly Dental providers, are improperly charging their patients fees for PPE and other charges related to costs due to COVID-19. Those fees are being passed along to the insurers. Ultimately the announcement was that they should not be charging a patient fees or charges in addition to their financial responsibility for covered services and that the insurer should not cover those charges. The current travel advisory has 35 states listed. The most recent revision was that Delaware and Washington DC were removed. Anyone traveling from the other 35 states are being asked to quarantine for 14 days. Mr. Shimkus said that he was on a Zoom conference today with Congresswoman Stefanik and a number of small businesses in her district. The issue of weddings came up, the best guidance they have is actually from a local law firm as opposed to the State. Weddings is a large business for Saratoga County and involves florists, caterers, hotels, restaurants. Brides and Grooms are being put off to 2021 just because we don't know what the rules are. Mr. Shimkus said that they know no dancing is allowed, but nothing in writing that clarifies wedding specifically. Mr. Hellwig said that there was an issue raised with receptions being held with the numbers exceeding the allowable cap of 50, but were somehow working around that with some of the banquet halls. Mr. Hellwig said that he will get more information for Mr. Shimkus on this matter. Mr. Richardson asked if anyone has looked into what is going on with Turning Stone and Foxwoods, as those casinos have been open for some time now. Mr. Richardson said that since they are Indian Reservations, gambling is going on in these casinos. Mr. Richardson said that patrons are required to wear masks and social distance. Mr. Richardson said that knowing the numbers from that region may help our Casino. Mr. Hellwig said that he will bring it up at tomorrow's call. Mr. Lawler said that if there is an explosion of positive tests due to the casino being open, it should be reflected in the numbers for that region. If

this is not happening, it's reasonable to expect other casinos to be able to open with the same safety plans. Mr. Richardson agreed. This is a perfect test case scenario.

Mrs. Duncan gave a Public Health update. Mrs. Duncan said that for Saratoga County today's number is 778, up 44 cases since last week. Hospitalizations have dropped down from 5 to 3. One of the gentlemen who was on a vent for 28 days is having a remarkable turn around and is doing well. They have been dealing with a situation at KAPL, who publicly announced how they had 47 total positive cases at Kesselring since March. Many of them could have been related to travel. Mrs. Duncan said that they assisted with their testing of 1,126 people with the Department of Health and from that number they only had 3 positive cases. Some of the other positive cases in the County came from a Dental Hygienist who was not wearing a mask and exposed 13 patients and 2 dentists. This Dental Hygienist is now unemployed. Mrs. Duncan said that the dental office did everything they were supposed to do, had policies and procedures in place, state of the art equipment, PPE and they were very disheartened to find out that this employee blatantly did not follow protocol.

Currently there are 357 people under quarantine and 56 active cases. The total number of tests is currently 48,886 and our rate right now for positive vs. tested is 0.2%. Mrs. Duncan said that they are now looking towards the Fall and starting to get prepared. Two new contact tracers have started. Next week, a third contact tracer will be hired. Mrs. Duncan said that her department, including the incident command center, have moved into the new Public Safety Facility. The item they are getting the most calls on now is regarding schools reopening. The schools are trying to figure out their plans, there is a lot of back and forth as to who is responsible for testing teachers and students. They are going to engage and try to help them to formulate a good plan as to how they are going to operate if students and teachers will be brought back into the buildings. Mrs. Duncan said that they had a Zoom meeting with the North Regional School districts. Since then, they have been very good about contacting the Public Health Department via email and trying to iron out the particular plans on when schools would be closed, how many children are allowed. There are a lot of unknowns that they are trying to figure out. Mr. Shimkus said that he participated in a Zoom meeting today with the School Superintendents and the COVID-19 team at Saratoga Hospital. One thing that came out of today's meeting is that one of the questions from parents and teachers is about protocols around if a student or teacher tests positive during the year. The teachers unions are now suggesting that the entire school be shut down. Saratoga Hospital's team said that every case is different in terms of contact tracing. Saratoga Hospital are focused on quarantining just the direct contacts. The School Districts are asking specifically if there could be one County and one regional protocol that they can share with parents about contact tracing and quarantining. There will be cases in the school district and the question is what do that do at that point. Mrs. Duncan said that each school is supposed to handle their own plan their own way which makes it difficult for the schools, however each school is unique. Mrs. Duncan said that she has not reviewed in detail the over 100 page document that was given to schools from State Ed. Mrs. Duncan said that she can talk to some of the other health department and see if they can come together with something for the districts regarding contact tracing and mitigation. Mrs. Duncan said that if everyone is doing what they should regarding PPE and mask wearing, and keeping socially distant, quarantine numbers can be minimized. Mr. Shimkus said that the Hospital is going to provide their policies to the schools regarding universal masking and how this was transformative at the hospital for protecting all of their employees. Since they went to that policy, they have had no cases within employees at the Hospital. Mrs. Duncan said that they can

put something together for the Schools as to when they should call the Public Health Department. Mr. Shimkus said that from an economic perspective, if one positive test within the school shuts the entire building down, the children go home and suddenly the employees have to leave work to take care of their children. At that point, it's not only the schools that get shut down, but the local economy also. Making sure we have a practical way of approaching this, and letting the parents and teachers know what that is will be very important. Ms. Gaston said that Saratoga Springs School District is having a public forum on Monday evening and suggested that a member of the Public Health staff take part and monitor some of the questions to help advise the schools. Also, Ms. Gaston is concerned about where students go if they are determined to be ill during the school day, prior to being picked up. School staff need to be trained on what to do with the child at this point. Mr. Lawler asked if it would make sense to invite the Superintendents from all of the districts to a meeting with Public Health so that they all hear the same information at the same time. Informing them what role Public Health will have, what we are required to do under Law and what resources we can bring to help them manage their own implementation plans to reopen. Ms. Duncan agreed and said she will gather information and talk to Ms. Medick about it. Mr. Lawler said that if additional administrative support is needed from the group to put this meeting together, to reach out to him or Mr. Hellwig.

Mr. Zurlo gave an enforcement/complaints update. Since the last meeting there have been 120 violations/pause complaints that came in. Most of the complaints are for people not wearing masks at retail stores, restaurants and bars. 13 of the complaints are for people that traveled back from the quarantine list states and did not self-quarantine for 14 days. Approximately 20 complaints regarding social distancing, graduation parties, outdoor parties and crowds in bars. One complaint for a bar not serving food while serving alcohol. A handful of complaints for businesses that are open and should not be open, such as gyms. Mr. Zurlo said that enforcement is still verbal, advising and educating people on the rules governed by the State of NY. Mr. Zurlo said that many of the complaints are repeat offenders. Mr. Zurlo said that he is going to have to rethink how they are currently doing this as it has come to the point where it is tying up a lot of his resources. Perhaps they may call the businesses and speak with the managers rather than physically visiting the establishments.

Mr. Hellwig distributed a handout regarding an Inside RX Pharmacy Benefit Card. The handout is attached to these minutes. Any resident that does not have prescription coverage and is currently paying full price for their medications, can potentially get a discount through this program. A link to the program is also on the County's homepage. Additionally Express Scripts Parachute Rx is a program for anyone that loses health care coverage as a result of COVID-19. The links to these benefits will also be placed on the reopening webpage.

Mr. Shimkus said that the Mask-Up program began in the City of Saratoga Springs. The Committee that the City put together for this just met for the first time on Monday. The City has appropriated funds to hire a PR firm to come up with a Mask-Up Saratoga campaign. The City is fine with treating this information and content as open source. As soon as the content is available, Mr. Shimkus said that he will look to the members of this Advisory Group who indicated they were willing to help to figure out how to expand it Countywide. Ms. Gaston said that she and Supervisor Veitch are part of the plan at the City and are reviewing the information. There have

already been some mock ups of potential plans and the City is happy and interested to work with the County as it benefits everyone.

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](http://www.saratogacountyny.gov/county-reopening). Updates are continually being added. Mr. Rose said that the Rx Scrips information will be added today. To date the site has had just short of 40K total views. Mr. Zurlo suggested putting the school reopening plans on the reopening website.

Mr. Shimkus said that he will be able to report on the final numbers of the reopening campaign at the next meeting. Hotel statistics from July should be available by the end of August. Mr. Lawler said that a presentation of the analysis can be done at the September Economic Development meeting and from there, request a presentation to the full Board of Supervisors at the September Board meeting.

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday August 19, 2020 at 3pm.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Therese Connolly  
Deputy Clerk of the Board