

TOWN OF VERNON

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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APPROVED MINUTES

February 17, 2022

Town of Vernon Local Recovery and Reopening Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, January 27, 2022 – 11:00 AM

Via Zoom

1. Roll Call

Members Present: Michael Purcaro, Town Administrator and Emergency and Risk Management Director; Shaun Gately, Economic Development Coordinator; William Meier, Director of Business and Finance; Daniel Wasilewski, Fire Marshal; George McGregor, Town Planner; John Kelley, Police Chief; Lou Spadaccini, Town Attorney; Julie Clay, Council Member; Steve Prattson, Building Official; Andy Marchese, Zoning Enforcement Officer

Members Absent: David Owens, Communication Specialist; Patrice Sulik, Director of NCDHD; Pauline Schaefer, Former Council Member; Bruce Kloter, President of Swiss Cleaners, Milton Jackson, Owner of Jamaica Kitchen

Roll Call was performed at 11:06 AM by Nichole Greco.

2. Public Comment – None

3. COVID 16 Incident Command Update

William Meier updated the committee on the following items:

- Mr. Meier explained there was a post-holiday spike between Thanksgiving, Christmas and into the New Year just like the rest of the state and country. Since then we have seen a drop off in the cases like we have in the larger community.
- We are continuing to maintain the mitigating measures that have been in effect and following the latest public health guidance. All public health guidance being implemented in coordination with the town as well the schools with our local health director and our COVID medical director Dr. Rampal as well as our school nursing staff.
- Changes that we have had for a couple of weeks; we are not conducting routine contact tracing per state DPH guidance. We are still following mitigation strategies such as masking and social distancing.
- Every school office principal and school nurse has access to test kits to distribute as needed.
- People are able to get easier access to COVID testing and that has been a great relief to our staff and families.

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- Discussion ensued.

Mr. Purcaro shared the update report provided by Patrice Sulik and her staff:

- Covid-19 positivity test rate continues to decrease statewide, now at 10.93% compared to 18.4% about a week ago
- Number of patients hospitalized statewide with Covid-19 is also decreasing
- According to DPH for their daily update on January 26, 2022, there are currently 1,346 patients hospitalized with COVID-19.
- The local health district observed similar trends in key COVID metrics. COVID infections, hospitalizations, and associated deaths are trending down.
- New Omicron Co-Variant B.2 is now on their radar by the state. There has been one case in Fairfield County – not of concern yet but is a variant of interest.
- CT DPH and OEC (Office of Early Childhood Education) will still recommend wearing masks in schools if Lamont’s Executive Order is not continued Feb 15th.

Mr. Purcaro dug a little deeper into the data:

- There is a new category the state is putting out called “Risk associated with being unvaccinated” for COVID-19 in CT and the most recent data as of January 19, 2022 and reporting the number of cases of COVID for fully vaccinated people 136,171.
- 5.33% of people contracting COVID even being fully vaccinated.
- The risk of unvaccinated person testing positive to COVID as compared to a fully vaccinated person is 3.2 times greater. The risk of unvaccinated person dying from COVID as compared to a fully vaccinated person is 13.9 times greater. This data has been obtained from the CT DPH.

What are we doing in Vernon; we have become 1 of the 7 regional testing sites in the state of CT from the Governor’s office. We were actually the first of the new 7 site approved by the state. This was launched about a week or so ago. This highlights some major changes with our strategy with the state:

- Our agreement with SEMA4 labs and our relationship with them have been terminated. They were a great partner and helpful to our community. It was not a requirement for SEMA4 labs to work with us.
- We have a new arrangement that has been sponsored and facilitated by the state of CT with Griffin Health and Jackson Laboratory. The contract has been executed between the state health department and Jackson Laboratory. That is where all of the testing and processing itself is being done. Jackson Laboratory has sub-contracted with Griffin Health for collection of the tests.
- They have a very different operational tempo and rhythm, very high speed. So far great working relationship and very pleased with the service and results we are receiving. Griffin Health is bringing a lot more resources and capacity to our community and region.
- Receiving National Guard support, by means of greeting patients at the door and putting labels on the tests. Assistance will continue for the next couple of weeks.
- Testing clinics are 4 days a week: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Friday. We are finding the total number of tests are declining, we can ramp up or down as needed.

Mr. Purcaro asked for questions:

Julie Clay, Council Member: The Town of Vernon has had a regional test site for 2 weeks now. What are the numbers of people that you are getting coming in?

Mr. Purcaro answered: We have not received the numbers from the past few days.

When we started we were off the charts with 250+ with pre-registrations and walk-ins. There is still a need just not nearly as much. There is an expectation as one of the regional 7 sites that we will continue to stay open as there is a need. Take the pressure off the health care system that was overwhelmed. The test results are coming back either the same day or within 24 hours. This is much better than what we were receiving from SEMA4.

Discussion ensued.

Daniel Wasilewski updated the Committee on the following:

- Since our last meeting we held three(3) booster shot clinics
 - December 15th - 446 booster vaccines
 - December 22nd - 571 booster vaccines
 - January 13th - 159 booster vaccines
- Our team has been actively involved in mask and test kit distribution
- 2,000 masks for homebound or travel challenged distributed.
- Engaged in local daycare centers
- Public mask and test kits distribution
- A small quantity is set aside for our employees that have been exposed or believe they have COVID
- Case by case basis – our social services department can hand out masks for those that are in need.
- These foldable BYD N-95 masks (green)
 - First responders are fit tested
 - Adults only and vulnerable population
 - Provide guidance with a risk management standpoint
- Discussion ensued.

4. **Current Guidance and Orders**

Shaun Gately stated that we are up to 121 executive orders. The newest Executive Orders are: 14A, 14B, 14C, 14D, 14E, 14F. Mr. Gately summarized the new executive orders.

We will see what happens with the Governors Executive Orders. More information to follow.

Discussion ensued.

5. **Local Mitigation Strategy**

Continue regional testing, enhance protect level. Town is continuing to maintain and enhance protective levels for our employees, visitors and schools.

The town is taking more proactive measures on our own by holding zoom meetings.

We have never closed during the pandemic.

Town departments have access to PPE (personal protective equipment) including hand sanitizer and being centrally coordinated and distributed through our Public Works Department.

Town of Vernon will continue to monitor the pandemic and take action as needed.

6. Next Steps

The Local Recovery Committee will schedule another meeting in two weeks unless we do not have anything to update and will push the meeting out 3-4 weeks. Please reach out to Administration if you have any questions.

7. Adjournment

Julie Clay made a motion to adjourn at 11:39 AM. George McGregor seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,


Recording Secretary

Nichole Greco