

**PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**(REMOTELY)
THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2020
3:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Kevin W. Hines, Chairman
Thomas Faggione, Kevindaryán Luján, Rob Sassi,
Joel Sierra, Kathy A. Stegenga, John S. Vero

ALSO

PRESENT: Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator
James M. Kulisek, Legislator
Peter V. Tuohy, Legislator
Antoinette Reed, Legislative Counsel
Dr. Irina Gelman, Commissioner of Health
Brendan R. Casey, Commissioner of Emergency Services
Carl E. DuBois, Sheriff
Anthony Mele, Corrections Administrator, Orange County Jail
Deborah Slesinski, Budget Director
Gretchen Riordan, Budget Analyst

Chairman Hines opened the meeting at 3:32 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present.

Ms. Stegenga moved to discuss the Corrections
Report, seconded by Mr. Luján.

Mr. Mele stated as of this this morning the facility headcount was at 376, of that 92 are ICE detainees and 80 are Marshals. The total revenue to date is \$4,330,820.00.

Mr. Hines asked if the jail is still clear of COVID-19 cases.

Mr. Mele replied yes, and the staff is healthy.

Sheriff DuBois commented they will be introducing new prisoners, ICE and Marshal service with the proper precautions.

Ms. Stegenga moved to discuss the Sheriff's
Report, seconded by Mr. Sierra.

Sheriff DuBois stated things are status quo and that is okay because everyone is healthy and ramping up training classes with the proper precautions in place. He added that the governor's executive order about community input and resolution regarding the plan for law enforcement agencies does apply to the Sheriff's Office. They are ahead of the curve on this because of all their accreditations. Furthermore, with the Commission of Accredited Law

Enforcement agencies which is the national accreditation CALEA, a lot of the standards that the governor has in place will be similar and will not be a free pass. The Sheriff's Office will still have to do some of the requirements in the executive order. He stated the accreditations received will make their job a lot easier when it comes to compliance. A plan must be submitted by April 1st, but he plans on showing it to the legislature as well as provide documentation in August for review. At some point in time they will have public hearings and comments. The Sheriff's Office will have a special detail assigned to this task of putting together the plan and presenting it to the legislature later this month.

Mr. Hines commented that it was the consensus at the Police Advisory Board meeting that DCJS was going to have a template for guidance.

Sheriff DuBois stated the Sheriff's Office can be the model for Orange County.

Mr. Vero moved to have a discussion regarding COVID-19, seconded by Ms. Stegenga.

From the perspective of the COVID-19 response, Mr. Casey stated the Department of Emergency Services is winding down and they have pushed out all the additional PPE supplies that were received from the state. They are down to a strategic reserve and have been encouraging all municipalities, first responders, and healthcare facilities to build up their stockpiles because the virus may come back in the fall. He pointed out that there is a county strategic reserve, but they want to get out of the "Walmart business," so people come to understand that they must take some responsibility for their own municipalities to have these supplies on hand. As we come into the fall, these supplies may or may not be needed, but he does not want to be the sole source indefinitely. The message was sent out, so he is hoping that people understand it. Everything else at the E-911 building is getting back to normal and as far as the response goes, they are in good shape and hoping they do not see a resurgence.

Dr. Gelman addressed the committee by stating that, to date, the county has 10,690 COVID-19 positive residents with 475 fatalities, 64,661 tested with 793 tested yesterday and the total positive percentage is 16.4%. She mentioned there is an app available for COVID-19 related resources for google, android and apple devices and urged everyone to upload it for their constituents. The Orange County Department of Health has been fully active in its response to COVID-19. Most of the department staff has been deemed "essential" in either their response to the pandemic or in activities that are continuing in the county such as food services, public water supplies and intervention services. She added they are encouraged to see the number of positive cases steadily decreasing along with the number of deaths in Orange County from COVID-19. As far as emergency operations and as Commissioner Casey stated earlier, as of two weeks ago, the Department of Health has largely moved out of the EOC and is now able to conduct most of the day-to-day COVID response work from the main office. The Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator continues to work with nursing homes, hospitals and various medical facilities to help with their needs in providing PPE and other necessary services. The Nursing and Epidemiological Divisions have been working six days a week collecting laboratory results, calling residents with their results, tracking data and are now working with NYSDOH on contact tracing. The Department is no longer using staff from other departments to help with data entry and contacting residents as these

departments have also moved into resuming operations. Contact tracing has proved to be very challenging as the state mandated computer software for conducting this work is new; therefore, they are running their own program concurrently to validate data. As far as the Environmental Health Division, as guidance from the state becomes more readily available with recommendations on issuing permits for summer operations such as daytime children's camps, pools, beaches, food services and public gatherings, the division is working closely with operators to get them into compliance. This too has proven to be very challenging as guidelines and the governor's executive orders leave them with many questions even though everything is updated daily. As of June 5th, the governor issued an executive order allowing special education services to operate this summer. She stated that they are getting a ton of questions on it and what they know so far is the order appears to only apply to pre-school special education, so that is ages 3 to kindergarten. She pointed out that the way the order reads makes it sound like it's a local school option; therefore, they are asking for clarity on that from the state and convening a meeting with the schools. The department has told the bus providers to get ready to serve students. Our County Early Intervention and Pre-School Special Education staff are working with providers by developing FAQs as well as working with schools to provide any support possible. Furthermore, virtual services have been provided by the division since the start of the pandemic, however, with in person services due to safety concerns, they are following the state issued guidance. She clarified a few misconceptions that are still pending. One being that there are several studies that have been published recently where the news has centered on dexamethasone treatment as this reported new cure. With a certain degree of caution, she stated that this is a steroid anti-inflammatory that is readily available. It is known for suppressing the immune system, so treatment with this early on is counterproductive which is a very important emphasis to make, however, the new case everyone has read about and is well aware of, did demonstrate that for those patients at a very high risk of death, it did diminish the risk of death by a third. These are the patients on ventilators and one-fifth of the patients on oxygen. She asked that everyone please keep in mind that this is for patients that are really in a fairly dire condition. This treatment truly does nothing for the main issue which tended to be hospital capacity concerns. As this treatment will be used for patients that are hospitalized and are already on ventilators and/or oxygen use. There was another interesting study which she received several questions about regarding multiple genome sequencing studies that are currently conducted and one of them has shown preliminary effects for individuals with Blood Type "O". The study showed that these individuals may possibly be less likely to develop complications and/or result in death from COVID-19. She then asked that everyone keep in mind that there are over 60 pharmacological agents that are currently being studied and have been studied from the beginning of this pandemic with remdesivir being the front-runner as far as actual anti-viral treatment therapy used as a therapeutic pharmacological option. There are 125 vaccines in various stages of development with seven of those being in Phase I, seven entering Phase II or trial and one in Phase III, so there is some promise on that end. As she has mentioned in the Health Committee, the flu tends to be somewhat of an issue as they are very much concerned with the typical low influenza immunization rates since they are very low for individuals under the age of 55. Of those, a lot are mandatory immunizations for the flu in healthcare workers, so if they do experience the anticipated secondary wave around fall, unfortunately this time around it will coincide with flu season. Furthermore, complications of flu and COVID-19 may prove to be problematic yet again for the hospital capacity component if nothing else.

She wants to make sure we are focusing on moving forward on a lot of campaigns and educational information centering on influenza and the flu vaccination. As well as the overall immunization rates, she has issued an executive order for maintaining immunizations for summer day camps for both staff and campers due to the fact that during the closure for the pandemic, our overall immunization rates are at an all time low. She cannot say enough about masks and making sure everyone promotes wearing one as well as washing hands and social distancing as proper measures even moving forward with the current low prevalence that we are seeing in the community. She stated that when it comes to wearing a mask, as she also mentioned in the Health and Mental Health Committee meeting, there needs to be some sort of instructional video for the proper use of a mask because there tends to be a lot of misconception as to what an N95 is versus a cloth mask. It is a courtesy to others to wear a mask and the higher compliance rates we have within the community that tends to protect everyone overall including those individuals that cannot wear a mask, have underlying medical issues precluding them from wearing a mask or children under the age of 2. One last piece of data that she mentioned previously regarding misconception is on age categories for both fatalities as a result of COVID-19 as well as COVID-19 cases in Orange County by age groups. As of June 3, 2020, among the ages of 0 to 17 there were 449 cases, for ages 18 to 44 there were 4,628 cases, for 45 to 64 there were 3,728 cases and 65 to 74 there were 847 cases and 75 and over 881 for a total of 10,533 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Orange County. The number of confirmed COVID-19 deaths by age group in Orange County as of June 5, 2020 were as follows: the ages of 18 to 44 there were 19 deaths with no underlying health issues, for ages 45 to 64 there were 76 deaths, for 65 to 74 there were 93 deaths and 75 and over 231 deaths for a total of 419 from COVID-19 in Orange County.

Mr. Hines asked how many children have been diagnosed with the Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS-C) in Orange County.

Dr. Gelman replied public health alerts were sent to all providers in order to make sure the Health Department receives all the data. Thus far, there have not been any reports.

Mr. Hines asked what the data shows if there is a spike in cases as the county moves through the phases.

Dr. Gelman replied they tend to follow the statistics extremely closely and have not seen any spikes associated that could be correlated directly to Mother's Day and Memorial Day weekend. They are still observing the data very closely to see if there will be any spikes or outbreaks as a result of protesting but has not been the case just yet.

Mr. Sassi asked if she and the committees she serves on have investigated how prepared we were as a county, and as a state we were not, and moving forward what are the things that we may consider putting in place.

Dr. Gelman replied there has been several discussions regarding those topics. The Health Committee is trying to ensure we are prepared for the anticipated second wave, but also that we are looking retrospectively at what can be done better moving forward. On the data end of this, they have put in a lot of safety mechanisms and restructured several departments to reevaluate all the divisions to determine what has been lacking prior to this.

Mr. Sassi commented that he hopes in the future some kind of plan will be in place and inform everyone as to how they can prepare for something similar.

Ms. Stegenga asked if any tracing has been done on the people who were deceased to see where they were or where it may have started.

Dr. Gelman replied patient zero for Orange County is a local resident with a local job who had not been outside of the county.

Mr. Kulisek asked if there will be an accessibility to masks for the general public if and when there is a second wave or spike in cases.

Dr. Gelman replied yes, there have been many distributed at several locations. They have been doubling up on the efforts based on surveillance of areas with a high prevalence across the county to make sure they are also sending out the educational messaging. Regarding cloth masks, they are disseminating a lot of information from the CDC so that people know how to make one, clean it and maintain it in a safe order.

Mr. Kulisek commented that he would like to make sure there is extra effort in getting masks to the heavily populated areas in the county.

Dr. Gelman stated they have been working on that initiative for months especially for the City of Middletown and the City of Newburgh and other areas based on their surveillance.

Mr. Kulisek then asked if there is a schedule or place of deposit for those masks and where they are going.

Dr. Gelman replied the schedules are released on social media and there is a continuous effort with the schools. They are closely monitoring the data, so that at any given point if they see the necessity for disseminating masks along with the educational component it will be done as it has been a continuous effort. All information on receiving masks are on the app she mentioned earlier, social media through the County Executive's Office and the Health Department and the Orange County website.

Mr. Kulisek expressed his concerns for the people who do not have the technology or access to be able to get this information.

Mr. Casey stated they did target distributions where they went out and hung bags on doorknobs to help people. There is no plan to open a 24 hour stand in a city to distribute masks for the indefinite future. If they see spikes in a certain area, they will go to it and distribute masks, but they have given out hundreds of thousands of cloth masks. He added they are not in a position to have a "farm stand" in the cities to hand out cloth masks 24 hours a day. It is up to the municipality to address the concerns and what they will do moving forward as well as get supplies.

Mr. Kulisek pointed out that they want to eliminate hot spots and get the masks to people before a hot spot appears.

Mr. Casey stated they are doing the best they can to keep an eye on the hot spots and if people have not figured out how to get a mask at this point, he does not know what else to say.

Mr. Faggione thanked Commissioner Casey and Dr. Gelman for their hard work and dedication. He suggested that everyone make little bags that contain one mask and one hand sanitizer and distribute them throughout their community as he has been doing. Furthermore, he offered to help his fellow legislators distribute whatever is needed.

Mr. Luján commented that the cooperation between the Health Department and Emergency Services is greatly appreciated. He along with others were going door to door, not only giving out masks, but also giving out information. As Dr. Gelman said earlier, it is not enough to just hand out masks and hand sanitizer, we must talk about the services available within the county and communities. He highlighted that everyone is trying to do their best, but the cities do need more masks.

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.