

# Mayor's COVID-19 Community Task Force

Meeting Notes

August 14, 2020

## Opening Remarks (Mayor Steve Hagerty)

- The numbers are rising slightly in Evanston. Now averaging five cases per day, up from three cases per day. This movement is consistent with statewide metric activity
- The Community needs to remain vigilant
- Continue to be concerned about individual assistance as we wait for aid at the Federal level
- The \$600 supplemental unemployment insurance ended July 31, and the community needs to continue to monitor issues such as food insecurity as well as other needs for local residents
- Outside negative influence on the City's racial equity focus (ie. speech regarding the confederate flag, curriculum in the schools for Black history, etc).

## Situation Report (Mayor Steve Hagerty)

- Region 10 has had 4 out of 7 days of increase on the positivity rate
- Evanston is at 5.8% percent positivity
- Hospital admissions have increased in the past 3 out of 7 days
- The infection rate is stable, remaining slightly below 1.1 percent
- The cumulative positivity rate in Evanston since the beginning is 5 percent
- The seven day moving average positivity rate is 2.6 percent
- Total cases as of today are 919, no fatalities
- A disproportionate number of cases overall are happening with younger people
- Campaign to wear face masking among younger people would be an idea to stress the importance of remaining vigilant
- Cases per 10K, at 123 Chicago is at 236
- Continuing to have financial responsibility related to COVID-19, \$1.3 million dollars
- Long term care facilities have shown four new cases this past week. The most vulnerable population remains the number one priority.

## Meeting Spotlight: Impact of Supplement UI Benefit Loss (Monique Jones, Betty Boggs, and Indira Perkins)

- Many non profit organizations are dealing with the impact of the loss of additional income from the supplemental benefits. Homeless and food insecurity are two main areas of need.
- The minority population is affected exponentially greater than most in our community
- Many donations come in from the Greater Chicago Food Depository
- The need remains for frozen protein foods such as chicken, hamburger patties, and eggs
- The agency also needs to provide more mental health support to residents who are struggling due to a lack of resources

- Currently moving families from hotels into housing, however there are a lack of landlords willing to accommodate residents with a few challenges
- The City continues to provide rental subsidies
- Staff is also needed to support residents transitioning into housing
- Legislators need to be aware of the urgency for this situation
- The community service partners are integral to this situation as well and continue to support with wrap around finance assistance
- Fundraising will continue among businesses who have not had an opportunity to assist yet
- After August 31, calls will be made to have another “match campaign” dollar for dollar from local partners
- General Assistance and Emergency Assistance are offered from the City’s Health and Human Services department
- Since the pandemic has begun, there have been over 230 applications for assistance. Typically the department experiences this type of influx for the entire year
- Emergency assistance is typically a one time item for help within a twelve month period; however, we’ve had to become flexible to match the need were possible in the community
- We offer rental, and mortgage assistance up to \$1,500. Utility assistance is also available up to \$1,000. The utility companies have worked with the City to develop payment plans for residents
- Food assistance is based on household size, and consists of a gift card to a local grocery store for items
- We also help individuals with job readiness
- Half of the emergency funding for rent is already utilized to date. This is a concern.
- The pop up food pantry served roughly 400 families per week; however, the concern regarding the loss of addition income may impact the need for food for some families

## **Sector Updates**

### **Hospitals**

- Northshore Evanston Hospital (Mary Alvarado)
  - 19 patients, 1 PUI and 5 ICU patients
  - Positivity rate stands at 6 percent
  - Currently planning for a surge if/when that should occur
- Amita St. Francis (Kenneth Jones)
  - Numbers are steady overall for the past month
  - Only three confirmed cases
  - Also preparing for a surge as needed

### **Senior Living (Mary Leary)**

- No report

### **Private Non-Profit (Monique Jones)**

- Continuing to work on getting our early childhood community on a regular testing regimen for safety purpose in conjunction with the local hospitals
- Will continue to reach out for a resolution

### **Northwestern University (Dave Davis)**

- Continuing with return to campus planning
- The Big 10 announcement will impact the local economy

### **Education (Eric Whitterspoon / LaTarsha Green)**

- 8/17 the ETHS school year will begin with remote e-learning, and staff will be present
- Appreciate the attention to Black history curriculum, and a campaign for young people to practice wearing a face mask
- Metrics have shown people are nineteen times more likely to become infected indoors than outside. PODS of 19 students will be implemented and all safety precautions will be taken
- Staff opening will happen at District 65 on 8/20
- Remote opening will happen on 8/27
- In person instruction will begin on 9/29 in accordance with guidelines

### **Legislators**

- **Jan Schakowsky's Office (Ann Limjoco)**
  - The Senate will reconvene on 9/8
  - The office is fielding many constituent calls around the postal situation
  - The Congresswoman has signed a letter urging the USPS Board of Governors to immediately remove the current Postmaster General
- **Senator Laura Fine's Office (Shiva)**
  - The business interruption grant program through the state has awarded roughly \$46 million dollars to 2,655 small businesses
  - The first round of grants will range from \$10K to \$20K
  - This money must be used on utilities and pandemic related expenses such as PPE
  - So far, \$930,000 have gone to roughly 56 businesses in our district
- **Robyn Gabel's Office**
  - No report
- **Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz's Office (Caryn Valadez)**
  - Working on constituents services for the mortgage relief program
  - Last week the state rolled out the rental assistance program which will go through 8/21
  - The requirement is for both the renter and the landlord to participate in the process

- Strongly encourage people to apply for assistance
- **Commissioner Larry Suffredin's Office (Adam Newman)**
  - 8/18 will be the deadline for rental assistance
  - Will investigate the postal issue with regard to Cook County voting and report back to the committee

#### **Business (Paul Zalmalek)**

- A few businesses are preparing for how to manage cold weather dining. Will share more information on the next call.
- The Main Dempster Mile links for a call to action for Congress:
  - This call to action asks Congress to fix surprise tax liabilities (especially for restaurants) who took PPP loans: <https://p2a.co/1J87Qk2>
- These links are calls to action mostly asking Congress to please stop sitting on their hands on the next stimulus, and specifically support the RESTART Act, which is the only long-term-focused bill to carry businesses through:
  - Small Business Majority call to action: <https://go.smallbusinessmajority.org/l/229072/2020-08-06/8t4py>
  - National Restaurant Association call to action: <https://mobilize4change.org/JfKG4QW>
  - National Independent Venue Association call to action: <https://www.saveourstages.com/>
- City Council recently approved \$70K for micro loans to roll out for local minority businesses

#### **Mental Health (Dr. Christine Sommerville)**

- Launching awareness of the education campaign on mental health
- Beta testing the mental health community survey to track how the community is progressing
- Mental Health dashboard will be ready to present to the group on August 28

#### **Faith Based ( Rev Michael Nabors)**

- Most houses of worship continue to meet virtually and maintain physical distancing when small gatherings meet
- Shared IDPH funeral guidelines protocol for local houses of worship to keep everyone safe
- Specifics will be sent to the mayor for information

**Next Meeting: Friday, August 21, at 1:30 p.m.**