

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Town Commission
FROM: Tom Harmer, Town Manager
REPORT DATE: October 27, 2020
MEETING DATE: November 2, 2020
SUBJECT: COVID-19 Update

Recommended Action

None, informational only

Background

The Town continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, monitoring trends and Department of Health data to formulate our decisions to protect Longboat Key residents. In accordance with our Interlocal Agreement with Sarasota and Manatee Counties, we coordinate our response with Sarasota County Emergency Management, and Department of Health.

Daily updates are provided to the Commission and public through various means, including website postings, local news outlets, and social media. We have enforced the Governor's Orders, CDC guidelines, as well as the Town's Emergency Orders.

On Friday, September 25, The Governor issued Executive Order (EO) 20-244, effective immediately, moving the State into Phase 3 Recovery. On September 30, EO 20-246, was issued which calls for local government meetings to return to in-person quorum and public participation for local government bodies effective November 1, 2020. Based on the Governor's Order, the Town Attorney has advised that all Commission meetings after October 31st will require at least 4 Commissioners physically attending, and opined that Commissioners virtually participating in the meeting will be able to vote, because we remain under a State of Emergency. The first in-person meeting will be on November 2, 2020 and plans are for that meeting to be in a hybrid format still providing for a virtual component.

Phase 3 of the State's Recovery Plan, lifts restrictions on restaurants, bars, fitness centers, vacation rentals, and all commercial enterprises, while stressing that social distancing, and sanitization practices need to remain in place.

Town staff has finalized plans, and will re-open Town offices and facilities (with some restrictions) and transition back to providing in-person services in the safest manner possible on November 2. (This coincides with the first in-person Town Commission Meeting.) Although all Town offices will re-open, the public is encouraged to conduct business on-line, by e-mail or phone when possible. Employees who have been working remotely will return to Town offices, except some e-work considered on a case-by-case basis. Patrons will be allowed entry to Town offices but are required to follow protocols including, but not limited to, answering a series of questions before entering, social distancing, wearing masks, along with the ability to provide for contact tracing. The health of our staff, and the public, is foremost in our plan to safely re-open facilities to the public.

The Commission adopted an Emergency Mandatory Mask Ordinance on July 2, 2020 and adopted Ordinance 2020-13 at the August 31, 2020 Emergency Special Meeting which continues mandatory mask wearing for an additional 90 days (through November 30, 2020). The Governor's Executive Order removes the capability to collect fines from individuals but does not limit the authority of municipalities to invoke ordinances for mandatory mask wearing. We have experienced excellent compliance within the community and have not issued any citations or penalties. If someone is not complying with our Ordinance, does not meet one of the exemptions, and is not social distancing, businesses can request that person to leave the premises. Likewise, the Town continues to require staff and visitors to Town Hall to wear masks to enter the building, while in the common areas, and in cases where social distance cannot be achieved.

We are closely monitoring the daily testing data and if the current trends continue, anticipate the need to schedule an Emergency Meeting later in November for the Commission to consider extending the Mask Ordinance beyond the current November 30th expiration date.

Test data continues to indicate a trend of lower, new positive test results, including very few positive cases on Longboat Key. I believe that is at least partly related to the Town's actions, and the precautions taken by our residents. As of Tuesday, October 27, there are no reported active positive case in the Sarasota portion of Longboat Key (less than 5 cumulative cases), and 1 positive case on the Manatee County side (40 cumulative cases). We continue to monitor the potential for a spike in positives due to Phase 3 re-openings provided for in the Governor DeSantis EO-244.

As part of the State's Phase 3 Re-opening there are no longer specific restrictions on gathering sizes but there is some guidance on risk tolerance from the Florida Department of Health. The Staff has built in a COVID related safety plan as part of our event review process will continue careful review of planned and proposed events a case by case basis over the next 3-6 months.

We continue to evaluate the conditions and update the Town's actions every two weeks. We believe it is critical to carefully consider which actions to take, and align those based on data, input from public health officials, as well as the best interests of our residents' safety.

At the November 2, 2020 Regular Meeting, I will update the Commission on the current status of COVID-19 as it relates to Longboat Key. Chief Dezzi and I will be available to answer any questions.

Staff Recommendation

None, information only.

End of Agenda Item