

State College Borough/State College Neighborhood Coalition Virtual Town Hall Meeting

Monday, March 30, 2020 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Opening Comments: (Tom Fontaine) This is a new technology and the first time the Borough is using this for a virtual meeting. Please be patient and following the meeting we will ask for your feedback about how the technology and format worked. If it is successful/useful, we may offer a Virtual Town Hall meeting for a larger group of residents. During this meeting we will provide a COVID-19 update on what is occurring in State College and the various strategies being employed to address the pandemic. Tom King will moderate the session. The topics we plan to cover include:

Agenda Overview: • Technology Overview – Douglas Shontz • Summary of Local Precautions and Preventions in Place – Tom Fontaine • Business Guidance – Tom Fontaine • COVID-19 Testing/ Life and Non-Life Sustaining Business – Brian O'Donnell • Stay-At-Home Overview/COP Strategy – John Gardner and Bernie Cantorna

Q & A Technology Overview - Douglas Shontz: Advised participants how the technology works and explained how to ask questions. Douglas will attempt to resolve any technical issues that arise during the session.

Summary of Local Precautions and Preventions in Place – Tom Fontaine Reviewed the current number of cases that have tested positive in PA, including 24 persons who have tested positive in Centre County. There is concern with the increase in positive cases. At the March 16 Borough Council meeting, prior approvals of various special activities were rescinded through May 10 and following PA Department of Health and CDC guidance, approved special activities between May 11 and June 30 will likely be rescinded in the near future. Borough Council is only meeting once in April and are limiting the agenda to essential, time-sensitive action. We are waiting on the PA legislature to pass legislation to permit virtual

meetings for local governments so that they can go back to regularly scheduled meetings that can be held online without there being a physical quorum present in the room due to the Open Meeting Law.

Borough Staff is working collaboratively with the following agencies:

- Centre Region Emergency Management Agency o acts on behalf of all 6 Centre Region municipalities o emergency declaration declared for all 6 municipalities o continue to coordinate daily
- Centre County Emergency Management Agency o Continue to coordinate with daily Penn State's Infectious Hazardous Planning Group Impact on

Borough government services:

- Most public access to the Municipal Building is locked EXCEPT for the first-floor lobby and the Police Department lobby. The payment kiosks and mail drop box are available/accessible in the lobby for payments or business needs. Persons can also make payments online.
- Parking restrictions on the streets have been suspended and parking in the garages is free.
- Late last week the PA legislature voted to provide a mechanism to extend a deadline for filing earned income taxes to July 15, 2020.
- Property tax deadline has not extended yet because it's a few months out. We will continue to monitor situation

Questions about parks recently:

- The Centre Region Parks and Rec (CRPR) closed playgrounds because there was no way to clean the equipment daily
- Parks do remain open currently
- Residents are encouraged to get out for exercise/hike/stay active but practicing social distancing

Centre County Recycling and Refuse Authority (CCRRA) has suspended curbside recycling collection because of the concern the virus can live on plastic and other materials for up to 36 hours. There are large recycling

bins that will be available in public places to drop off recyclables; we will post the locations of these bins on our website. Borough refuse crews will continue to collect the compost (green bins), regular waste and bulk waste.

Borough Staffing Precautions:

- Most employees, except for essential workers, are working remotely. We are continuing to find ways to expand remote work
- We continue to promote good public health/hygiene and education
- We have a Continuity of Operation Planning Committee that meets 3 times each week

Business Guidance/Resources: Tom Fontaine There are numerous assistance programs from Federal Gov. for Small Business Administration and State Government through variety of programs Chamber of Business and Industry of Centre County (CBICC) is the lead agency for resources for local businesses. The Downtown State College Improvement District is providing information and communication with all the businesses that are in the Downtown Improvement District

COVID-19 Testing/ Life and Non-Life Sustaining Business – Brian O'Donnell How to get tested if you are experiencing symptoms If you are experiencing symptoms stay at home and call your Primary Care Physician and if you do not have one call the PA Department of Health and they will determine if you meet the requirements to get tested Available testing sites:

- Mount Nittany Medical Center – ONLY if it is an emergency
- Med Express - North Atherton Street – this location can be used for anyone without a Primary Care Physician and for those with or without insurance
- Penn State's University Health Services – for students or family of students
- Mount Nittany Physician's Group or Penn State Health patients – drive thru clinic at 1700 Old Gatesburg Rd

- Geisinger patients – testing is done either in Bellefonte or Lewistown offices

About Life & Non-Life-Sustaining Business: Brian O'Donnell The Borough Health Officer has sent updated letters to local restaurants within the last two weeks with the newest operation CDC and PA Department of Health guidelines for operating during COVID-19. The primary GOAL is to educate business owners NOT take enforcement action unless necessary. Issuing warnings first is the guidance given by the governor's office.

- Non-Life-Sustaining business are being investigated/enforced by police
- Loss of license, fine and/or jail time is possible for businesses who refuse to comply with the Governor's Order Stay-At-Home

Overview/ COP Strategy – John Gardner Centre County Chiefs have been coordinating plans with each other for consistency purposes across the region. The primary strategy for the Governor's Stay at Home Order is education and compliance. How the officers are approaching possible violations: When officers observe groups of persons in close proximity with each other, they stop and have a conversation with the group and provide the group a handout that includes safety precaution information for stopping the spread of COVID-19. The goal is to gain compliance through engaging them in a meaningful conversation. The Order does not provide police a basis for stopping a vehicle or person on foot to request identification nor does the order require people to stay indoors. They are permitted to be in their yards and there are numerous exceptions that permit persons to leave home. The police are taking a Community Oriented Police approach in order to get everyone's voluntary compliance. Failing to comply with Social Distancing is not a criminal act but police want to attempt to get persons to practice social distancing to help reduce the spread of COVID19. About Gatherings:

- Philosophy stays the same – if there's a violation of the law or Borough ordinance occurring, police will take appropriate enforcement action

- If the complaint does not rise to a violation of the law or Borough ordinances, police will take the time to educate utilizing the Handouts. Police want to let people know that if there is something that is occurring that is a concern to call the police. The police department is fully staffed and available.

Q & A:

Besides police officers is there anybody else patrolling or policing the Borough? Tom King: A Borough Ordinance Enforcement staff person is working each day patrolling the neighborhood to make sure we don't have build up of any refuse or evidence of any parties or other violations that need to be dealt with. Currently, there has not been much activity requiring action by the ordinance officer. There have been some minor cases that it has been worthwhile having him out there patrolling daily to look for violations and to assist the police when needed.

Is it okay to share this recording and if so, how do we do it? Tom Fountaine: We are recording it to assess how well it goes. If everything is in order, we will make recordings available on the website for the community. We don't usually record and make available publicly meetings with the neighborhood coalition since it's not really a formal public meeting. We would first discuss this with the Coalition on how widely they would want the recording distributed. Over the next couple of days as we get feedback on the meeting, we will talk more about how the meeting can be distributed. Tom King: We can make the PowerPoint available but as far the recording as Tom Fountaine explained, he will check with the neighborhood coalition further, but we can post the PowerPoint presentation.

Why were parking restrictions lifted in the neighborhoods? People seem to be looking for a safe haven from NY and NJ and other areas which could contribute to more community spread? Tom Fountaine: We simply did not have parking that was in violation of the existing parking ordinances to a large extent and as a result of shutting down parking operations, the overnight parking restriction was also lifted since our parking staff are not working right now. Before this decision was made, parking patrol neighborhoods and all the streets in the Borough for about a week to

monitor violations and there were very few violations and a low volume of vehicles parked on the streets. Regarding the issue with visitors from other states coming to State College, there is no restriction on travel at this point and those owning or leasing residences in State College can return to their homes in State College. There are certainly some residents in the community that have vehicles with NY or NJ license plates but have leases here and are permitted to be here. We will continue to monitor parking in the neighborhoods. Parking was suspended because it simply wasn't an issue. If it does become an issue, we can bring the staff back out. Over the past ten days there has also been some questions regarding intercity transportation. Patton Township, State College and Centre County worked with the MegaBus company to stop the routes from NYC to State College and those have been suspended through April 9.

What is the definition of a gathering; are 3-5 people related or unrelated sitting on a front porch allowable or is 3 children playing in the front or back yard permitted? Bernie Cantorna: If you have residents or family members sitting out on a front porch or playing in the yard, they are staying at home, they are a quarantined group and are following the governor's Stay at Home Order.

So, it's only okay on the front porch or if kids are playing if they are all related? If there is someone from the next-door neighbor, kid or adult, then is it violating the quarantines? Tom King: In a technical sense it is violating the quarantine if a neighbor goes to another neighbor's house. The challenge comes in the inability of the police officer to go and use this as a basis for stopping people and detaining them or even questioning them and requiring proof of identification and proof of residency. From a practical sense it's a technical violation of the governor's order but if a next-door neighbor is playing with their neighbor in a yard that's not their own police are not going to know residency and they are focusing on the spirit and intent of this Order in keeping gatherings down and persons practicing social distancing.

What constraints are in the Order - outdoor exercise is allowed and the Order said something like exercise with social distancing, 2-3 people

walking a dog but they are 6 feet apart from each other, or if there are three people running but they are 6 feet apart from each other is that still within the boundaries of the order? Chief Gardner: Those examples are complying with, not only the letter of the law, but of the spirit of this. You can do those activities but need to adhere to the 6-foot rule.

If you are adhering to the 6-foot rule are there any guidelines on how large the group can be? Or whether it's related or unrelated persons. In Germany right now it is very strict, and it must be a family unit or no more than 2 unrelated people.

Need clarification if there is a restraint on the size of the group or whether it must be a family unit or not? Chief Gardner: The difficulty this presents for police is the legal authority. We can only approach these situations as a mere encounter and there is only so much the police can do without overstepping. Tom King: While there are limits on the enforceability of the Order, the Governor's orders intent is for people to stay at home. The intent is to for people to quarantine themselves and not have neighbors over or visiting.

What are the recommendations as far as travel and family get togethers for Easter, Passover holidays? Brian O'Donnell: Persons should only be traveling for essential life sustaining reasons. Basically, stay at home.

What is Penn State's responsibility to help with students' violations of social distancing? Tom Fountaine: Penn State has worked closely with us on issues related to social distancing in social events by student organizations. Penn State police, as well as Student Affairs and others at Penn State, have worked closely with us to make sure that they understand our approach to enforcement and that they are working with us to communicate information discouraging students from returning to State College. PSU has prohibited social events by organized and recognized student organizations. They are not permitted to hold a sanctioned social event. The challenge comes with student tenants or residents who certainly can be outdoors on the properties where they are living, whether it is a fraternity or rental unit located somewhere else. Just like family members, all tenants including students can be outdoors. Penn State did make it clear that they

will be enforcing the off-campus code of conduct throughout this issue as we go through this and as we work through this process when we observe violations that could be subject to student code we would refer those violations to Penn State and they have agreed to work with the borough. PSU has many years in addressing those specific issues. Penn State also communicated to their students as well as the parents through their normal communication channels over the past several weeks encouraging the parents and students to make sure they are following the CDC and department of health guidelines. The guidelines generally, up until the Stay at Home order Saturday discouraged gatherings of ten or more people. Penn State has accepted their responsibility and has indicated through the communication they provided the students as well as what they have done with us that they are certainly going to cooperate when dealing with these issues.

Will the parks be patrolled by either SCPD or Centre Region Parks and Rec and have they been posted? Tom King: Regarding that last part of the question, the parks were to be posted/are to be posted today. I haven't verified that that has occurred, but the plan was when the decision was made over the weekend that on Monday, they would post the parks that the playground equipment is closed. Chief Gardner: He can't answer for Parks and Rec but part of the police daily patrol activities, officers will patrol the parks and will continue to do so. Tom Fountaine: Parks and Rec doesn't have any enforcement ability; however, they will continue to provide maintenance as its essential and if they see something that would be a violation, they will report it to the police. At the current time the only thing closed in the parks is the playgrounds and the rest of parks are open.

How is the Borough reaching those that don't have internet access or are not member of the neighborhood association? Tom King: Thus far our communication is trying to keep the webpage updated, working through the neighborhood association, working through CBICC, and the Downtown State College Improvement District. Douglas Shontz: The Borough expanded the bandwidth of the Schlow Library that provides internet access in the parking lot. Anyone who wants to pull up and get free internet

they are allowed to. Also utilized our Earned Impressions through our media partners for both print and over the air so anytime we need them to push something out they will do so. Tom Fountaine: The Borough's Community Engagement Office is working with social service agencies and other community organizations to facilitate those kind of communications with individuals that either live alone, elderly or just don't have access to those types of communications to make sure that their needs are being met and that they are aware. There are numerous agencies that we have been working with to address that. We have also worked with Out of the Cold program and Housing Transitions to address the homeless population. Currently some of the homeless in the area are being housed at hotels in State College, given the mass availability of hotel rooms since there is no travel occurring really.

To what degree is the Borough monitoring the social media sites to look for evidence that the students maybe organizing to come back and party? I'm hearing from my students that I work with at Penn State that there is talk of encouraging a return to town on blue and white weekend? Douglas Shontz: The Borough has software that aggregates all public social media comments and they are providing 24/7 support for all communities that utilize their services. We are able to stay ahead of it to best utilize the information from that for our decision-making process internally. Chief Gardner: We also will continue to reach out to our partners at Penn State and the PA State Police who provide us intelligence from various social media sites they closely monitor. With all three of these sources, we should be able to get good information. Citizens need to be reminded that non-life sustaining travel outside of their homes or towns for the holiday's is a violation of the governor's order. Bernie Cantorna: It is indeed exactly what the governor wants us to, not travel outside of their home or towns for holidays because you go out and have contact with other people who may have had contact with someone exposed to the virus.

If we see a larger event going on can we call the non-emergency police number so number so they can discuss voluntary compliance with that

group? Chief Gardner: Absolutely they can, in fact that's what we encourage people to do. That number is **(814) 234-7150**.

Do you anticipate an influx of students near end of the semester, especially families of graduated students to take pictures, etc.? Tom Fountaine: We are continuing daily to monitor social media. I have not seen evidence of this yet and would defer to the communications staff that has been monitoring. Nothing has been called to my attention. Certainly, as the next several weeks develop, we will be watching for that information to see what might come up.

The other question that we have had is if students who are moving out of State College has Penn State worked on a plan to coordinate and limit access to the residence halls for move out. Penn State has a plan in place in which students would be brought in small groups with scheduled reporting times rather than opening them all at once. They don't know when that may occur. It was postponed because of the stay at home orders.