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CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY OFFICIALS PROVIDE UPDATE ON COVID-19

Two New Cases of COVID-19 in Chautauqua County Today

MAYVILLE, N.Y.: -- On May 15, Chautauqua County Officials held a weekly press conference to update the public on the novel Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) in Chautauqua County.

COVID-19 is an infection associated with fever and signs and symptoms of pneumonia or other respiratory illness. If spread in the population, COVID-19 could have significant public health consequences.

As of May 15, Chautauqua County has:

- 46 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including two new positive test reported today, which are a female in her 60s and a female in her 70s;
- 9 active cases, which continue to recover under orders of the Local Health Official per New York State Public Health Law;
- 33 recovered cases;
- 4 deaths;
- 149 cases under quarantine/isolation orders by the Public Health Director and being monitored. Not all of those being monitored are confirmed to have COVID-19 but have either shown symptoms, are awaiting results, or have risk factors; and
- 1,656 negative test results to date.

Earlier today, New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that five of the ten regions of New York State were able to reopen as they have met all of the seven metrics outlined for reopening. These metrics include:

- 14-day decline in net hospitalizations OR under 15 new hospitalizations (3 day average);
- 14-day decline in hospital deaths OR fewer than 5 deaths (3-day average);
- New hospitalizations (under 2 per 100,000 residents) - 3 day rolling average;
- Share of total beds available (threshold of 30%);
- Share of ICU beds available (threshold of 30%);
- 30 per 1,000 residents tested monthly (7 day average of new tests per day); and
- Contact tracers 30 per 100,000 residents or based on infection rate.

The Western New York Region, which covers Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie and Niagara Counties, is one of the five regions that is not able to reopen at this time as it has only met four of the seven metrics.

“If we look at Chautauqua County’s metrics, our scorecard shows that we are meeting all seven metrics and we are prepared and ready to responsibly reopen to Phase 1 if we were allowed to do so,” said Wendel.

“The Office of Emergency Services staff have worked through this historic pandemic to ensure first responders, law enforcement, health care workers and others have proper and sufficient quantities of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) by distributing them as needed throughout our County,” said John Griffith, Chautauqua County Office of Emergency Services Director. “In coordination with the Chautauqua County Health Department, we have also provided logistical support for COVID-19 testing in Chautauqua County and trained EMS paramedics have been performing swab testing to provide the test numbers required by New York State.”

Wendel also announced he has been in discussions with Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties about seeking approval from New York State to enter Phase I reopening as a sub-region.

“Allegany, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties have much more in common with the Southern Tier Region, which opened Phase I today, then we do with urban centers within the Western New York Region,” said Wendel. “Our three counties have similar population densities and COVID-19 statistics. It is critical that we work together to urge the Governor’s Office to allow our sub-region to open based on our metrics and public health capabilities.”

As of May 15, 2020, the statistics for all three counties include:

	Allegany	Cattaraugus	Chautauqua
Cases	43	50	46
Active	9	15	9
Recovered	33	33	33
Deaths	1	2	4

Hospitalized	0	2	1
Tests	1010	2072	1702
Negative	967	1673	1656
Contact Tracers	20	25	78

“Intense community mitigation strategies were enacted not to eradicate the virus, but to slow the spread of this disease,” said Christine Schuyler, Chautauqua County Director of Health and Human Services. “The low rates of disease in Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties demonstrate that those strategies, as well as our inherently low population density, have worked. I feel that we can naturally expect to see more cases as things reopen and people move about more but the Health Departments of Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties possess the expertise and capacity to adequately manage disease investigation and contact tracing throughout this pandemic.”

Chautauqua County Executive PJ Wendel also extended his State of Emergency Declaration for Chautauqua County for up to 30 additional days as of 5 p.m. on Thursday, April 14, 2020 due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. This extension of the Local State of Emergency will help the County qualify for state and federal assistance related to its response to the virus.

“As the Western New York region has not met Governor Cuomo’s metrics test for Phase 1 reopening, I extended Chautauqua County’s State of Emergency Declaration,” said Wendel. “It is important residents know that this local declaration will not prevent our county from reopening once the Governor gives us the approval. The primary purpose of extending this local state of emergency is to support the County’s continuing reimbursement claims to the State and Federal government for COVID-19 expenses. The County is facing enormous fiscal impacts from the pandemic and we must do everything in our power to maximize reimbursements.”

Wendel also announced that the pandemic will have a substantial reduction on the County’s budgeted sales tax revenue, occupancy tax revenues, and State Aid.

“In response, and in consultation with the County Legislature’s leadership, I have taken remedial actions over the past month to offset the expected revenue shortfalls arising from the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Wendel. “Today, I prefiled a 2020 budget amendment resolution, which will offset over \$4 million in expected revenue shortfalls.”

Other remedial actions that have been taken include:

1. Instituted a hiring freeze for other than essential positions;
2. Eliminated the use of overtime unless related to the COVID-19 response;
3. Suspended the purchase of new equipment or leases, unless necessary to keep staff working or to respond to COVID-19;

4. Required that all purchases over \$5,000 be approved by the Budget Director, and that department heads reduce purchases under \$5,000 to the extent possible;
5. Began tracking of all incremental expenditures related to COVID-19 for potential reimbursement from FEMA;
6. Eliminated all unnecessary travel, including commitments for future discretionary travel, such as conferences;
7. Directed department heads to delay any non-essential spending and contracts for services, and to carefully monitor Federal and State funded programs for possible aid reductions;
8. Negotiated a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with CSEA Local 6300 dated today, May 15, 2020, to implement voluntary furloughs to achieve necessary reductions in budgeted expenses as an alternative to layoffs. When the savings from the furloughs are quantified, additional 2020 budget amendments will be presented reflecting the reduction in personnel expenses.

Chautauqua County Government continues to have a variety of resources available for individuals to stay informed of the County's statistics and updates for COVID-19. Daily updates are available by 5 p.m. each day on:

- Chautauqua County's website at chggov.com by clicking on "COVID-19 Information" on the home page.
- Chautauqua County Health Department Facebook page at www.facebook.com/myhealthycounty/
- Chautauqua County Government Facebook page at www.facebook.com/chautauquacountygovernment
- Emailed directly to individuals who are signed-up to receive the County Executive's "Monday Memo" newsletter. To sign-up, go to chggov.com and under the County Executive's page sign up under the Monday Memo Newsletters tab.
- Chautauqua County Public Health COVID-19 Hotline-- Individuals can hear the daily update of COVID-19 cases in Chautauqua County by calling the Hotline at 866-604-6789 and selecting option 6.

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