

EARLY BIRD WEEKLY

NewbergRotaryEarlybirds.org



November 26, 2020

Last week Casey Kulla, Chair, Yamhill County Board of Commissioners, delivered to us a State of the County talk.

Obviously the biggest thing in the county is the public health and economic crises brought about by the pandemic.

The commissioners declared a state of emergency that has been in place now for eight months. He started a leadership round table of mayors, business leaders, legislative and congressional delegations to speak to the community with credible, timely information that people could trust.

Right now, in Yamhill County, the virus is considered wide-spread as defined by the CDC.

People in the county with new diagnoses over the last 14 days are now 288 cases per 100,000 with 12% positivity rate. Sometimes it's hard to understand what that means.

By CDC standards, a moderate spread is about 50 cases per 100,000. Widespread is over 200. And the target is 5% positivity, we're at 12%.

44% of new diagnoses are from the Latino population of our county. A lot of that appears to be close households, limited resources for protection, and employment that exposes them to greater risk.

We have had about 16 deaths in our county.

In Oregon we have a case mortality rate of 1.4%. But the larger picture is that 75% of the spread is caused by people that are symptomatic. The disease can be transmitted by asymptomatic carriers, but it's less likely.

About 7% of cases result in hospitalization with some spending up to 45 days in ICU, three times the normal stay.

One of the things that prompted the statewide two week freeze (some people are grateful, some are resentful) in some activities, is that Portland metro area hospitals had reached capacity.

"As your own Newberg Councilor, Elise Yarnell Hollamon puts it," we can have a sustainable life in this community if we all do just three things.

- 1) Wear a mask, indoors and out, around people not in your household.
- 2) Wash and sanitize your hands frequently and don't touch your face.
- 3) Keep your distance from people outside your bubble.

Another thing that helped early on is that the

cities of Newberg and McMinnville worked together with the County and YCAP to identify hotel spaces that were unused during the Spring shutdown and have been renting them with funds from state and federal government, in cooperation with hotel owners, to get people off the street at high risk of COVID complications.

So some of our chronically homeless have been staying in hotels where they get heavily case-managed, they get food, daily check-ins, with the goal of getting them in to stable, permanent housing.

As of this talk, 66% of those "chronically homeless" have since transitioned to permanent, stable housing.

We're getting people off the streets, keeping people healthy, and stabilized the community.

Two of the things that have been challenging. One is that internet access is something we need more than ever. Casey was participating from his rural home via hotspot from a cell phone in just the right place for a signal.

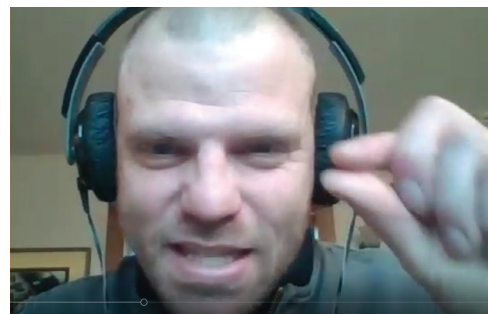
The county tapped into the Fed's Coronavirus relief fund that were allocated for us and using them to invest in cell tower infrastructure. OnlineNW, one of the county's ISPs, is expanding its wireless coverage to the county's hardest to reach areas.

The other area we've been expanding is childcare access. Yamhill County is a "childcare desert," with a lack of childcare needed with kids kept away from schools.

In Newberg DCI is working with the county to provide childcare to the community, as well as its own workforce.

On to election results. We have an incoming commissioner and treasurer and a couple mayoral changes in the county.

And we in Newberg have seen the power of the individual vote with a City Council race that was "this close," with McBride holding his seat by 9 votes.



He was excited that we passed Newberg's School Bond.

McMinnville's races saw a large degree of partisanship and money flowing. Casey doesn't see this as a good thing. At the city and county level "We are really here to drive the provision of services to you. It's not really about ideology. It is how we form our perspective, but it's not how we make our decisions. But, campaign finance reform is probably going to change that, so stay tuned for that at the state level."

The other major impact on the county is the passage of Measure 110 and the decriminalization of personal amounts of narcotics as we see how that shakes out.

And we can't discount the recent rash of wildfires that came so close to so many of us. And Casey is so grateful to the Yamhill County Sheriff's office and Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue for all they did.

The County Fairgrounds accommodated animals from here and from the coast and Hagg Lake fires.

Look for a coming Rural Fire Prevention Week for defensibility and prevention.

The County's Public Works is working on clearing brush on rural roads and repairing 133 bridge infrastructure. Because, as you all know, we have a risk here of a catastrophic earthquake.

The Bypass is entering Phase II and a meeting with ODOT next week to connect Rex Hill to Wynooski.

In Health and Human Services we are looking at expanding Newberg's presence for mental and behavioral health services.

We have learned that "tele-health" actually works for mental health crises.

Also is uncertainty how Meas 110 will impact funding. Will they lose state money or get more for treatment options.

At county and state levels was a large release of prisoners posing low public safety risk to depopulate prisons. Casey says we have not seen a corollary rise in crime with those people back in society.)

On economic development, has been denial of Riverbend Landfill expansion onto adjacent farmland.

Transit stopped intracity routes. Watch for ride sharing to replace or augment busing.

Wrapping up, we are surviving the crises of 2020 and helping each other thrive, now and in the near future.