

[THIS IS AN UNEDITED REALTIME TRANSCRIPT. I AM A NATIONALLY-CERTIFIED CLOSED CAPTIONER, BUT THIS IS NOT A CERTIFIED TRANSCRIPT, IT IS TO BE USED FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY -- KATHY ROBSON]

>> BULLOCK: I'm Bill Bullock. Seated with me to my right is Mayor Cliff Schultz from Bridger. Amy Hyfield, the public information officer here is managing the site. The board of public health member, Dick Nolan, is also here. Questions can be submitted via comments. We'll try to address all of those questions and comments here or get back to people with answers. If we can't answer them here. That we will be posting on Facebook and archive as soon as we can this even tire event. A transcript from Kathy Robson will be posted soon after the event, thank you to her for providing this. Amy? >> Amy: I wanted to give you an update date on where we are in carbon county. First I wanted to introduce everybody to our new Carbon County dashboard. This can be found at CarbonAlert.org site. If you go to the Covid-19 incident you can access the dashboard. Our goal here is to be able to provide data about the Covid-19 event in Carbon County. Can you look at some of the information that the team is using to try and monitor the situation in the County as well as informed decisions around what's going on with Covid-19. We'll point out, we currently

have 7 active cases in the County. A total of 50 positives. This shows that trend over the last two weeks. You can see the total number of positive cases is creating active cases. Two other things I'll highlight, getting the connectivity from the previous day, this is talking about how many positive tests have come back with respect to how many tests for Covid-19, how they have done in our County. We would like to see that number below 5%. We're also getting information about the capacity of our hospital, our public health department. Reference to the hospital capacity, this is strictly looking to the Covid-19 capacity, it is not response for the emergency room, accessibility. There's plenty of other information on here that we will be highlighting in the future and getting more information about. I encourage you to check this out, as you can, to get a little bit more information about what we're seeing with Carbon County Covid-19. The symptoms of Covid-19 with cough or shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, a fever or chills, muscle or body aches, vomiting or diarrhea or new loss of taste or smell. If you experience any of these symptoms call your provider and they will help you connect you to a test. Other reminders, school is of course about to start. I know Red Lodge school plan has been put out on the Red Lodge school website. Also Athletics, the athletic

plans from the Montana high school athletic association, is linked there.

Sports physicals and immunizations are available at the clinic, make an appointment with your provider.

If you have an event coming up and you would like the Carbon County team to review that for your plans, adherence to the directives, please submit that via the carbonalert.org web page.

We're still doing grocery and essential delivery for those who are at risk for contracting Covid-19.

Those who have tested positive or placed in quarantine by public health.

And you can access that 406-445-7258, and leave a message and we will get back to you with the information on that.

So, I will let you take it away, Bill.

>> Bullock: Thanks, Amy.

Going back to the considerations for different orders, plans and everything that goes with it, for clarification.

A lot of the decisions that have to be made, guidance, and/or enforcement, issues with the directives, either issued by the County health officer, Bill George, or the governor, governor Bullock's directives, that enforcement arm lies solely per state law with the County board of public health.

We will be meeting later today to discuss how enforcement may be handled if it is there.

There's been a few ideas kicked around, so far as process.

But we're going to try to identify that today and get a plan going forward and present that to the public.

Just for my thoughts if it is going to be considered, it has

to be both repetitive, egregious, and ongoing.

And it needs to be backed up with the complainant saying what the issues are.

Again, that's just a proposal.

One of the thoughts put forward right now, there will be more to come later today, and as we will move forward that will be put out either -- that will be put out on carbon alert or our P.I.O.s get together and get the message out so everybody is aware and clear what the expectation is.

There's nothing about this whole process that is easy or hasn't taken place without thought going into it.

You know, there's -- our citizens, I can't say enough, throughout the County, how much effort has been put in.

I want to convey, again, the respect I have for my neighbors and everybody trying to do the right thing.

I'll go back to the board, one of the boards on an event that just wrapped up, Carbon County fair took place.

That board took steps above and beyond to ensure that, one, their event would meet the directives that are out there. And just the anguish and care they took to plan the event so that it could take off and occur with as little interruption and for the greatest good for those 4H kids and FFA kids to continue on for some sort of normalcy going into the year.

I take my hat off to those folks.

Their effort was absolutely amazing and appreciate what they did in getting their event to take off.

So there will be more to come, but going back to enforcement plans, how this looks, the sheriff has been included in the

conversation, the County attorney has been included in the conversation, and police department has as well.

As soon as there's a clear thought going forward we'll get that out.

Part of the contemplation, too, what the thought was, why mayor Schultz is here, we wanted to get perspective throughout the County.

Talked with the mayor and council people.

I was interested to see the similar thoughts to come from the town of Bridger and then how they coincided with a lot of the technical difficulties and problems we are having at the County.

Mayor you want to weigh in a little bit and give us insight as to what's going on in town?

>> Schultz: Sure, in the town of Bridger, and Clark's Fork valley over there, we're experiencing the same challenges and, you know, concerns that just about every community, small community in America is probably facing. I would say that the biggest challenges that we face are just we're on information overload. We have mandates and directives and guidelines, and of course trying to keep the objective in mind that we're trying to keep people safe and healthy. And those are challenges. Challenges for our businesses, challenges for our town government.

I know that thankfully we have a good staff of folks at the town of Bridger that have spent the time and effort that we need to go through all of those things. And understand them, ask questions from direct people. I think, I'm not sure we've done everything right but we've done everything to the best that we know how to do it.

I know our businesses as well in Bridger, I'm very proud of our little community of course.

They have, as we all know, there is a very diverse -- there's a great diversity of opinions about all of this that goes on. And we recognize that in our own communities and businesses recognize that.

And they've done very well to follow the directives, the mandates, the recommendations, the guidelines.

Respecting the diversity.

I'm like you, our town and businesses, have done a very good job of, like I said, being respectful of each other and following the guidelines to the best that we can.

>> Bullock: That's one of the things I've noticed, I don't know if it's your experience, Cliff, that just in all of the guidance and directives that have been issued there still are windows for interpretation. Going back to that and looking at that it's hard, I guess, as an elected official seeing the windows and that discretion left up to local entities as the County, we've followed the line a lot of what the governor's directive has been put out as. Not exceeding that as of yet. Again, riding that line where we're at.

It's hard to, I really struggle with the point that we do any more are we doing too much and going to push past some people's expectation.

If we do any less are we doing too the and not meeting people's expectation.

That's really been the experience in this whole thing thus far.

It's that line where we're at. There's no easy part of any of it.

>> Schultz: It's a difficult

situation.
There's things we have been mandated to do by the governor, by the CDC, and of course with the County as well.
And there, again, that's one of the greater challenges we have had.
We've gotten good information. Been able to get good information from people who, you know, we reached out and we have the information that we need. It is, it is information overload.
And then you have to make the decision on what you have to do and then what you are recommended to do.
Then what you should do.
Then how do you do those things that should do.
All the while respecting everybody's individual circumstances.
Yeah, it is challenging.
But, again, I'm pretty -- more than pretty pleased.
I'm very pleased the way our community has reacted to it all. Our businesses, you know, recognize that they need their patrons and we certainly need their services.
Certainly.
And so we respect that.
Like you said, I believe our community has reacted well to it.
>> Bullock: Thanks, Cliff. Touching on the information piece, the mayor touched on himself, going back to the dashboard that Amy Hyfield had up earlier.
For the community, for everybody, there's going to be something for you to consider so there's the state dashboard that's commonly referred to under nightly news and the like. There are minor discrepancies between that state dashboard and the County dashboard.

I can affirm the fact that the County dashboard is accurate. The information on our dashboard at the County comes right from our public health nurses to our public information officer and data analyst.
So what is put out at the County level from Carbon County is most accurate on our site because like I said, those statistics are coming to the P.I.O. and put in through the data analyst. The data may be off and different, but I encourage everybody to go to the site and find the County statistics to find out the most accurate sense of what's going on.
Those are done every day by 9:00 or 10:00.
Most complete update is daily at 10:00 A.M.
Amy had submitted questions, do you want to go through those and I'll try to answer?
>> Yes.
So one of the questions that we have had, and you spoke a little bit about the enforcement piece and how you've been working with the sheriffs and the police. This question was directed specifically to the Red Lodge police department.
This person feels that there has been little effort or no effort to require that officers wear masks around the public, locals, and tourists.
And they want to see if you can comment why they're not -- when they're not keeping their distance from members of the public, why this person is seeing them unmasked.
>> Bullock: This question has been posed more than once, that directive by the governor's office.
That discretionary component of every directive that's been put out, in the exceptions portion of that, does refer to public

speaking.

It can be extrapolated from that, as a peace officer, speaking to whomever it may be, whether it's a violator of the public or whomever, that is public speaking and could be excepted to that.

This is just the reality of what's there.

Again, going back to that, too, with the current state of affairs in this country, whether -- whatever person's feelings are about law enforcement at the end of the day, although there's a masking directive going back to that function with peace officers and law enforcement.

Would I struggle not being able to see the face of the person who's telling me what to do, conforming with the law, or what I'm violating and how it is that that's put out.

That inflection in their speech and ability to communicate is imperative to that whole interaction with law enforcement.

I know from the County end of things, I spoke with sheriff Josh McQuillen, he encourages his deputies in public, going into a store to get gas, going in some place, a public place, have your mask on.

He left it up to discretionary to their public speaking forum and their duties, how they roll it out.

I have to defer to the sheriff's judgement and guidance to the officers.

How they do it on a regular basis, what they do, in doing the best they can to conform to the masking directive.

I would defer back to the sheriff and those departments affected by it.

>> Okay.

Another question, we've seen

some debate about this, as a business owner what can I do if some one comes into my business and says they cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition.

>> Bullock: I know a lot of P.P.E. and masks have been provided to businesses, can you provide the information out there.

It goes back to that whether a business has face shields on hand and can provide to customers, is there something they can do in a driveup fashion, the owner, proprietor can go outside and meet the individuals.

Or offering a phone or online offer to the business, to the potential customer to service their needs.

Those are all options.

I struggle with this a little bit, you know, when you talk about fourth and Fifth Amendment, providing services, you get into a strange area there.

Probably attorneys apply.

But it goes back to common sense.

That proprietor of that business has that ability to refuse that service.

If the person makes an issue of it and have to have it handled a different way, it can be considered a trespass issue.

Or does the business owner want to delve deeper into the issue, want to ask what the concern is, what the health issue is.

So they can address it with additional P.P.E. so the service can be provided to the customer. There are a lot of questions to it.

But that goes back to a comfort level with that prospective business and who the client is. >> I'll also point.

Out that if people have additional questions about the

masking directive, at the state website which is Covid19.MT.gov there is, you can find links to a face mask, covering frequently asked questions.

You should be able to find many of the answers to your questions.

That one is addressed down here at the bottom.

You can go and try to find those answers on that website, if anything additional comes up.

Thanks for that, Bill.

Another question, this one is specific to school plans.

And it has to do if a teacher or student comes to school with a doctor's note saying they don't have to wear masks, what is the protocol.

If the teacher doesn't have to wear a mask in class and students come down with Covid-19 does this mean the teacher will have to isolate every time a student gets sick.

There's a lot of interest in the details of what's going to happen at school.

Cliff, I know you said you sit on the Bridger school district's committee to come up with these plans.

Maybe you can't speak to that specific question but can you let us know where you are in the process?

>> Schultz: We're on the tailend of the process.

We've met multiple times, multiple hours.

What we have found out, it's very much a liquid, moving target, literally.

We'll adjourn a meeting and get new information within minutes that kind of upsets everything -- not everything, but something that we previously decided to.

But, yeah, we are on the tail end of putting out the final plan with the caveat that it's

going to be likely a very fluid document, has to change.

As far as those questions that were just asked, we have discussed them, in multiple meetings and really no clear directives on that just yet. Yeah, we plan to have something out soon.

I don't want to put a date on it.

Our Superintendent has done an outstanding job and we have had very, very good participation from our committee.

>> I can speak for Red Lodge mainly because my kids go to school.

There I know they put out their plan yesterday.

So we'll provide links to the school district plan as we're able to get them.

The specific question, within their plan, they have down here, the Carbon County health department plan, some direction around what is the plan if a student gets sick.

Or -- as I understand it, if a student or a teacher or staff is unable to wear a face mask, then a face shield is something they can consider.

So I encourage people as the schools provide these plans, that you will be able to get a lot of the answers to those questions within those.

As you mentioned, it's a moving target, things may change as we get more information.

We'll help the schools distribute that information as well.

With regards to whether a student gets sick or a teacher gets sick there's a whole page at least on the Red Lodge school plan about what they plan to do. Bridger is a different school district.

You may have slightly different protocols in place.

You have a different student body, different teachers.
Excellent.
>> Bullock: Any questions coming in?
>> I have at least one more. I need to grab it.
Are the residents of Red Lodge or any other community in the County for that matter being told which establishment has positive Covid-19 servers and workers?
Are you tracking who in town they may have been in contact with?
Are all employees of establishments, workers, tested when one tests positive.
>> Bullock: So, no, that hasn't been the case thus far. There are privacy issues with public health with that information.
There's been no directive coming down that that's a requirement. The test lies with the individual.
I think it would be challenging to start labeling specific businesses as having employees with, or testing positive, with Covid.
That's just perception-wise. It just hasn't risen up to that level yet.
Cliff, you have anything over there that's come up like that?
>> Schultz: We're a small community.
Over time, people become pretty aware of what's going on. But, no, we respect those regulations that demand privacy. So, no, it's not -- I think a lot of folks know what they know.
We're not putting any effort into invading anybody's privacy.
>> Bullock: Going back to the entirety of the issue, and I've been to quite a few restaurants in the last month and a half, two months.

In my perception that everybody is -- everybody's ability and willingness to make it work. I have not seen a restaurant worker, front line worker, grocery store worker, not wearing mask or some kind of P.P.E. on.
I have to commend them, it has to be difficult, wearing a mass income public places, I challenge with it myself. I do it when I'm asked to. I feel safe going to establishments, those that are affected are experiencing symptoms excused from work and getting a test. Found out whether they're positive or negative, then they're quarantined, those actions taken by public health to ensure that it's not an issue going forward into the greater community.
>> I can speak for public health, they do have a protocol in place for when somebody tests positive.
All of the close contacts are then contacted, and they work out a way to quarantine them, get them tested, make sure that as you mentioned there's not spread.
Our public health department is working very hard to make sure that we do not have unnecessary spread of this disease through their normal what they do all the time which is testing, quarantine, the contact tracing protocols.
And fortunately, we have been able to get some additional assistance from the state to help boost up the public health capacity in order to do all of those things.
So there was an additional question, why did Yellowstone County close businesses but not Carbon County.
I don't know if that's in

reference to -- I'll try to find out what that is in reference to.

>> Bullock: That would be good to know for clarifying the question, as to when.

>> Sam's place in billings was closed.

>> Bullock: Oh, the Red Lodge ALES -- oh.

>> The Cider works.

>> Bullock: Probably a better question for Yellowstone County, Yellowstone public health, Riverstone health, Mr. Felton down there.

>> There was additional comments around the question around police officers masking.

People wanting to also protect law enforcement.

Hoping that there will be more than encouragement for masking within that department.

There's a question about are you saying we do, in fact, have community spread.

>> Bullock: I think that was contemplated at one time but going back to contact tracing and our public health, they've contacted all the contacts in relation to positive cases from what I'm aware of.

We get an e-mail when there's a positive case, it's indicative in the e-mail of whether all of the contacts have been made and the tracing done appropriate to that specific said.

-- specific individual.

>> So I can speak from our transmission pipeline up here, what community spread is, that we have some one who has contracted the disease in our community and they are unsure how they -- what that contact was.

We have cases that fit that definition of community spread in our County right now.

So from basically that person tests positive and says I don't

know where I got this.

I haven't been to my knowledge in contact with somebody that has -- tested positive.

So that is the definition of community spread.

And we do have some of those cases in our County.

We will be putting that information up there on our dashboard in terms of what that type of transmission is.

But public health is doing their best, as we said, to fry and figure out what the transmission type is and go and contact all of the people that have been close contact with the individual.

Challenging work.

Hooking for additional questions.

Oh, Steve Simonson wanted us to point out that the state's Covid assistance for business adaptability has increased their funding ceiling from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per business for P.P.E. and other protective equipment. If businesses are needing to procure additional P.P.E., to help out with the masking mandate or help their employees be able to work around safely, then they can go to that Covid19.MT.gov and apply for funding there.

That limit is now \$10,000.

Thanks for that information, Steve.

Checking on Instagram.

Okay, is the County health commissioner mandating masks for all students and teachers in the County or suggesting that?

>> Bullock: I don't think so. They're referring to the local districts.

The districts are formulating their plans to bring forward. Specific to Red Lodge I know that Superintendent Fitzgerald and County health officer Bill George have spoken, I think

there's consensus between the two, as far as red Lodge's plan going forward.

That's what I can speak to here. I think Cliff has done a pretty good job outlining what is going in Bridger.

>> If you have any questions about the individual school plans, we will try to make links to that accessible.

I believe that for Red Lodge they are saying that the students and staff should wear masks.

But, again, each County district is coming up with their own plans regarding that.

So we will see -- and of course there's multiple plans within each one.

I'm sure, Cliff, you have multiple scenarios depending on what the situation is in the County and what the situation is in your community.

>> SCHULTZ: That's correct.

The decision on the mask decision hasn't been completely made.

Certainly there will be masks. To what extent when, where, how, the decisions haven't been completely made yet.

>> Okay.

So another question, since last week, have we seen an increase or surge in cases since last weekend?

>> Bullock: I think that's -- yes and no.

So for perspective as of about 3:00 yesterday, what was projected for this morning was that our caseload would be recovered to the point of only having three positive cases as of this morning.

Since that initial output from public health, there was four more cases identified as positive as of last night and yet this morning.

There was a big reduction.

But that goes back into the time frame, that 14 day time frame roughly.

Where people are at right now.

We were down significantly.

Basically there was an increase in the cases, identified positive cases, since that indication of the downward slide.

What's the right answer?

Yes and no.

There's both.

>> We'll keep monitoring that and people can go to the dashboard and monitor that as well to look at what our active cases do over the next -- going forward for sure.

A question about the information on the dashboard, is it up to date.

So the Carbon County information, we are displaying the information from yesterday.

We're getting data over the course of the day for today.

The Carbon County data is from yesterday.

The Montana data that we display ends up being from two days ago.

That simply is because they report their information from the day before by 10:00, of the day of.

To be consistent with that, we are putting the trends up there from two days ago.

If you want the most correct other counties or other state information I encourage you to go to the state dashboard.

But for our Carbon County data, we're updating it as best we can by 10:00 every day.

Today we're displaying the information that comes through from yesterday, July 29.

>> Bullock: I would defer to the County dashboard.

The public health nurses, Amy, they've done a main staking job to keep it as relevant as possible.

I would still encourage everybody to go to the County dashboard. That's most recent within the County.

>> All right. Person would like to know why there's no biohazard to dispose of worn masks in the County by visitors.

>> Bullock: That's a really good question, I don't have an answer for that.

>> Okay, that's fair. Just checking to see if we have additional questions that have come through. Is there a concentration of active cases in one community in particular, potentially Red Lodge, and again I'll point out to our dashboard and we have it by district. This is overall cases, it's not necessarily active cases. It may be that needing to consider putting an active case thing up there. Although we do have down here on this County map the number of active cases by district as well as cumulative cases by district. You can look at the numbers there. Currently for our active cases, we have more in the Red Lodge district, Bridger district sitting at zero. And there's one in the Joliet district currently. Let's -- you can go and hopefully be able to access that information daily if we'd like to follow that. Steve Simonson is going to help out with the question about the Yellowstone businesses that have closed and get some more information on that. Thank you, Steve. Looking for additional questions. I'm not seeing anything else. Okay, I am not seeing any

additional questions. If they come in I'll try to answer them directly. You want to wrap it up, Bill?

>> Bullock: Thank you, Amy. Thanks Cliff for being here. Thanks Dick for stopping in. We're trying to get as much information on the and keep things relevant. We're trying to take a whole approach picture to this issue. Going through the summer. A lot of uncertainty, a lot of concern going back to some of the concerns I've seen. Some of the reasons why we're going to succeed in this. Everybody wants to get back to life of normalcy. Normal sports season and trying to get through this and get back to where we can say things are normal. Everything that we can do, we're doing right now. I would just ask everybody to hang in there. We will get through this to the other side.

>> Thanks, gentlemen. And we will do another update in two weeks. Unless something comes across that we need to get out to everybody quicker than that. Thank you very much.