Good afternoon, Pinecrest. This is our COVID-19 update for July 17th.

This week, the focus has been to brace for the impact of this disease on the hospital system as it nears a critical mass with no signs of slowing.

Our primary goal has always been to protect the capacity of the hospital system so that those who need critical care can get critical care; thereby preventing unnecessary deaths. Protecting this is now in jeopardy. The current trajectory of the disease is unsustainable.

This week we have made important decisions in managing the situation. The hospital system is implementing a contingency plan to deal with the hospital capacity. We have enhanced our inter-local coordination between all cities and Miami-Dade County. We have coordinated directly with the governor. We are moving closer to attaining necessary contact tracers and reducing time it takes to receive test results. Pinecrest has increased restrictions and we, collectively as a county, are carefully considering all other of reversing this disease’s trajectory should these strategies fall short. We are running out of options, but at this time, our medical professionals are not recommending going back to the regulations we had in April.

It is never time to panic, but it is time for each of us, particularly our younger people, to take personal responsibility and double down on the behavior that we know can make the difference. The medical professionals are telling us that the simple act of wearing a mask would significantly limit the spread.
The Hospital Projections

The hospital executives from all area hospitals meet multiple times each week and coordinate our system with the hospitals in Broward and Palm Beach counties. They report that with about 2,000 COVID patients this week, the system is nearly full, but the situation is still manageable. Their projections estimate that if our recent restrictions (curfew, mandatory mask order and prohibition on indoor dining) have the desired impact, the number of people in the hospital could still increase by up to 75% by the peak at some point in early August. If this occurs, we can uncomfortably manage our way through this peak. We will begin to see if we were successful in about a week. If not, we will need to further increase regulations.

The Hospital Plan

To maintain sufficient capacity, hospitals are managing the patient flow. They are reducing elective surgeries. They are admitting patients only when their condition requires that they be admitted. They are discharging people as soon as their condition warrants, and no later. They are metering patients to keep a balance and converting regular beds to ICU beds.

They are making sure their employees, doctors and nurses are protected, and are confident that the personal protective equipment (PPE) is sufficient.

Impediments to the Plan

There are significant supply chain issues for nurses and drugs. Because of the management of patient flow, the critical shortage is not necessarily in the number of beds, but in the number of healthcare providers to staff them. It is estimated that as this progresses, we will need up to 2,500 additional nurses and are working to bring them from out of state.

The drugs are running low. About 12% of the people in the hospital are put on the drug Remdesivir. The hospitals receive shipments every two weeks. The two-week shipment received last Saturday lasted only 4 days.

Governmental Coordination

This week, I met face-to-face with Governor Ron DeSantis, along with other Miami-Dade municipal mayors, and we made direct requests for more contact tracers, help in reducing the time it takes to receive test results and autonomy in how and when to reopen schools. It was a small step in the right
direction. All mayors in this county are meeting together multiple times each week and receiving a unified set of facts, data and analysis from the medical professionals. It is safe to say that never before have the leaders of our cities and this county been so closely coordinated.

What can we do to stop the spread of this disease?

It has been reiterated, time after time, that the most critical thing we can do is wear a mask. Work from home if you can. When out, stay distant and practice great hygiene. Avoid private indoor parties. All businesses need to conform to the rules and internally contact trace their employees as best they can. Government needs to enforce the rules rigorously. If this all happens, will be able to contain the disease. Once contained, the enhanced contact tracing and improved test results timing will be able to control it.

In Pinecrest, we will be initiating two testing facilities to relieve the pressure on local hospitals. We have closed the gym at the Pinecrest Community Center, we have suspended the Freebee transportation service and returned it to meal delivery only, and we have prohibited short term rentals. We have adopted rules allowing for civil penalties with significant fines for violators of the county’s mask order. We are monitoring our commercial district on a daily basis. Businesses that are found in violation will be fined to the maximum extent of the law and will go through a detailed recertification process. Our enforcement is at zero tolerance. Nothing is off the table and if we need to take further steps we will. We monitor this all day, every day. People must comply with these rules if we are going to prevent unnecessary deaths and further economic hardship. It is up to us.

The Numbers

Again, this week, the incidents of the disease are greater in all measurements than they were last week and greatly exceed our peak in early April. There are currently few signs of the disease slowing. The disease is not within our control.

In Miami-Dade County, we have tested, on average, about 9,400 people per day over the past two weeks. Last week, the average was about 8,000. Positives cases this week hit another one day high of 3,576. Over the last two weeks we have averaged 2,500 positive cases per day. This is about 15 times higher than where we were two weeks after the initial relaxation of rules on businesses and about six times higher than where we were at our peak in April.
When measuring the rate of infection, we have a goal of keeping the percent of positive cases out of total tests under 10% on average over a two-week period. This number has gone from 8.6% in early June, to 24% last week to 27% this week. In the last few days, we have had daily percentages as high as 30%. Over 75,000 people have tested positive overall. Last week it was just over 50,000. It is estimated that the actual number of people who have had this is 10 times as high or over 750,000 people countywide. This is about 1 in every 4 people in the county.

When we measure hospital capacity, we look at beds, ICU beds and ventilators. We should stay below a 70% utilization rate. We are running low. Today, 52% of regular beds are being utilized. In early June, 17% were being utilized. Today 107% of ICU beds are being utilized. Last week this number was 97%. In early June, 16% were being utilized. Today 35% of ventilators are being utilized. This is 60% higher than where we were at our peak in early April. In early June, 5% were being utilized.

At the peak of the disease in early April, we had 710 COVID-19 patients in the hospital. When we relaxed our regulations and opened businesses, the number of patients in the hospital was at 664, 7% less than the peak. Two weeks later, we hit a low of 546 patients, 23% less than the peak. Since that time, the number of COVID-19 patients in the hospital has climbed. Yesterday we had 2,067 patients. This number is 187% greater than the peak and is rising.

Average deaths per day over the last 14 days is rising in proportion to those in the hospital. Most of the deaths are people over 60. Over the next month, we can expect the death toll to rise significantly.

This week, most of the cases are still affecting people in the age group between 18 and 34 years old, with a median age of 40 which is lower than last week.

Coronavirus is everywhere. Any unmasked interaction may put you at risk. Wear a mask, wash your hands and watch your distance. Do not attend an indoor party. If you take a test, treat yourself as “positive” until you get the results. If you are called by a contact tracer, please answer their questions accurately so we can begin to pinpoint the direct sources of this disease.

Outside of taking individual responsibility and wearing a mask, we have no good options remaining. We must learn to live with this disease until we beat it. The battle will continue through the summer, into the fall and winter. This is our way of life in the foreseeable future.
We at the Village of Pinecrest are here to help us get through this crisis. If you need to contact me, please do so at 305-606-2364 or jcorradino@pinecrest-fl.gov. Or contact our staff (manager@pinecrest-fl.gov) and Village Council (council@pinecrest-fl.gov). Each and every one of us is working hard every day as a unified team.