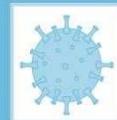


Coronavirus



MAYOR'S SEPTEMBER 25, 2020 STATEMENT

The Honorable Joseph M. Corradino

This week we are progressing well, but our medical experts have expressed cautious concern about the trajectory of the disease. We are still in a holding pattern, waiting for time to pass into early October so we can determine the direction resulting from Labor Day and the recent relaxation of regulations. While our numbers are down from last week, the experts project that the downward trend is leveling off. We need to slow down to wait and see if the numbers begin going up, and if so by how much. The best time to mitigate the next wave is now.

The complicated part of this is that we do not know specifically why the downward trend is stalling and, therefore, have no precise way to correct it. This is because of the sporadic and hurried way we approached the relaxation of regulations each week over the last month.

These changes were made against the advice of the medical experts, not because of the rules that they relaxed, but because of their timing and spacing. Optimally, we should have gone through Labor Day, waited two weeks to observe the results, and then considered the next item. Then waited two weeks to see the results, and repeated that process, over and over again, in a methodical way to actually control the disease.

The experts are now urging us not to make any more moves until mid-October, so we can see if we can stabilize this and prevent it from escalating out of control like it did in June. That way we can move forward with medical numbers we are comfortable with as a community, and not whatever the numbers will be as a result of impatience and a lack of discipline. It is not an all or nothing proposition, it is a balance that we can control to large extent.

There are two major decisions that are now being considered. One is in-person learning at the public schools, which would see nearly 400,000 young people go back to the classroom. The other is the opening of nightclubs and bars. Each would undoubtedly result in an increase in cases, but if we can contain and stabilize the impacts, we can understand and manage them. Thankfully, the Miami-Dade County School Board has decided to hold off in-person learning until that time. This will provide knowledge, time and flexibility, which will prevent chaos and uncertainty. The net result will lower the stress level on all of us and enable a more fully opened economy faster than reacting dramatically to uncontrolled swings in cases.

The Numbers

The utilization of hospital beds, ICU beds and ventilators are down from last week, and better, in most cases, than they were at their low two weeks after Memorial Day, which was the beginning of the last wave. Today, the utilization of regular beds is at 4.5%, it was 16% two weeks after Memorial Day. The utilization of ICU beds is at 11% today, it was 14% then. The utilization of ventilators is 8% today and it was 5% then.

Hospitalizations have leveled off for much of the week. Today, there are 355 COVID patients in the hospital. There were 546 people in the hospital two weeks after Memorial Day. We have not been at 355 people in the hospital since April 5th.

The 14-day average positivity rate is lower than last week, but it has slowed and leveled off. We strive to keep it under 10% on a two-week average. The medical experts suggest we should have only considered further relaxation of the rules when we got below 5%. This week's numbers are, for the first time since this wave began, below 5% - at about 4.4%. Most of our recent changes were made at a rate between 6% and 8%. In early June, the rate was at about 3%.

As we begin to see a slowing, the way to keep the trend from reversing and becoming a wave is to test and contact trace vigorously. Still this week, the effort is inadequate. There are about 600 tracers, where we need 800 or more to do it right. Tracers are calling about 90% of the people that are tested positive. More than 50% of those called are refusing to participate. If you are contacted, please cooperate; it is critical to our defense. To help further, Miami-Dade County is offering hotel rooms for people who can't isolate elsewhere. They are developing a contact tracing app for cell phones. The app, called CombatCovid MDC, can determine if your phone is near another person's whose owner has identified as COVID-positive. It alerts you

without disclosing the other person's identity. The app requires no personal information; no GPS or location data is tracked.

We are again at a critical point in our response. We just need a little more time to digest what is going to happen before moving any further forward. We expected a spike ahead of a fall wave. It takes two weeks to see the results of an action. If we wait until the numbers are bad, it's too late. Control can be lost quickly, and before we even realize it. To handle this more effectively than we did at the start of summer, smart and timely decisions need to be made.

Unfortunately, at this point, decision makers are less coordinated than at any point in this crisis. A fall wave will need to be addressed by a brand-new county mayor who will need to have a plan and a coordination system ready on day 1. The future response needs to be better than what we have done in the past. We have learned a lot and we need to use that knowledge. What is needed in the future is constant communication between the county mayor and officials, the medical experts, the municipalities, the state, and the school board.

All of this is a sign that we have not yet beaten the disease and that we will need to continue to deal with it this fall, into the winter and spring. This is not unexpected and we can handle it and dampen the intensity of any increase if we simply do what we have been doing for the last two months; wearing a mask, washing our hands, avoiding large gatherings, particularly indoors, and staying six feet away from others. We already know how to live with this disease. It is working. As things continue to be more flexible, it is not an all clear signal. We can and will do this if we stay disciplined.

Wearing a mask is the most important thing we all can do!

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 jcorradino@pinecrest-fl.gov or 305-606-2364. 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.