

Outlining the Mayor's press conference

The Bethlehem Gadfly coronavirus April 13, 2020

 Latest in a series of posts on the coronavirus 

Great idea! Glad the Mayor and team did this. Well done! Sorry it took Gadfly so long to get to it. What questions do you have? Anything not covered?

Press Conference April 9

31 mins.

Mayor Donchez:

- went over closings
- and tax extensions
- reminder not to flush wipes and paper towels
- suspended referrals to collection agencies
- gave thanks for people making masks

Kristen Wenrich, Bethlehem Health Bureau Director (min. 3:10)

- as of 4/8, 222 case, 1 death
- staff doing interviewing of close contacts
- 13% hospitalizations, compared to 10.8% in state
- positivity rate 18.8% compared to 17.2% in state
- 53% of our tested positive cases in age group 25-49 tested to 41% in state
- 37.93% of these hospitalized compared to 19% in state
- our 65+ age group is lower than state
- youngest case 11 months, oldest 95, average age for positive cases 46 years old, average hospitalized 54
- % positive in hospitalization by race: 57% white, 16% black/African American, 2.7% Asian (doesn't add up to 100% — reference to a graph that was not shown)
- Hispanic/non-Hispanic: 43% non-Hispanic, 38.6% Hispanic, 18.7% unknown
- doing mapping of cases

- investigating case, acting as a resource
- homeless: portable toilets, handwashing, housing
- complaints are investigated
- models predict peaking locally this week
- community spread is occurring
- housing for medical workers best dealt with by hospitals
- work-sites investigated, for instance, Walmart Southside
- working with employers

Bob Novatnack, Emergency Management Coordinator (min. 13:20)

- no staff infected
- appropriate equipment being used
- all CDC guidelines being followed
- people are staying home, traffic is down
- food chains good
- people outside on Monocacy, fishing season open
- follow spacing guidelines

Alicia Karner, Director Community and Economic Development (min. 16:15)

- not issuing permits
- but ok for medical supply chain
- emergency permits ok
- projects at Wind Creek and Lehigh on hold
- will get federal relief funding
- businesses should apply for government programs
- events have been canceled

Mayor Donchez (min. 19:05)

- primary June 2, apply for mail-in
- projecting through today's prism a \$5-7m deficit
- Casino is biggest loss — \$800/mo.
- freeze in spending
- hiring freeze
- furloughs and lay-offs last resort
- reviewing all projects, for example, may delay pool opening

Eric Evans, Business Manager (min. 22:43)

- all depts. working
- very little dialed back and some ramped up
- changing shifts in field crews, proper distancing guidance given
- lots of unknowns in budget
- Real Estate taxes (36% of budget) should be ok
- income tax vulnerable (15% of budget)
- Casino big item
- smaller impacts: amusement tax, interest income
- hiring freeze
- no furloughs at this time
- identifying projects to be put on hold
- no question a “punch in the gut”
- Rainy Day fund will help
- will have clearer idea by budget season in the fall

Did you folks suffer the great wind like Gadfly a short while ago? Can't see some parts of his roof so not sure of damage there. But he has somebody else's shingles across his yard. If you want to claim, bring proof of purchase and REAL-ID.