

From the Mayor...

May 8, 2020

Last week I asked if I could extend the deadline of this column another week. I did that so that I could discuss the easing of restrictions Governor Holcomb proposed last Friday afternoon, which was well past my deadline. The news out of Indianapolis gave us all a bit of optimism, guarded, as it may be, that our efforts may be paying off.

I believe what the governor has proposed is a very thoughtful, measured approach that will only advance if measurable factors continue to improve. Almost every type of business or activity was addressed. Assuming that progress continues, by July 4th, retail, restaurants and bars, fitness facilities, and personal service establishments could be back to full capacity. (School operations were listed as TBD.) Conventions, sports events, fairs, and festivals, could also resume by then.

As good as that all sounds, be forewarned! The unchecked Covid-19 virus continues to pose risk. We cannot let our guard down until a vaccine is available. Experts say that could be 12 to 18 months from now. The success of this well laid out plan is in no way guaranteed unless we all continue to do our part! The good hygiene and distancing practices we are becoming accustomed to are critical and must continue.

The plan consists of five phases with specific timelines that gradually relaxes restrictions. Progress into the next phase is based upon positive and improving data in four sectors. They include hospitalization rates for COVID-19 patients, the ability to continue to meet the demand and improve testing, developing a centralized database that traces the contacts of those infected, and maintaining the ability to meet the surge capacity for hospital beds and ventilators.

Testing is one of those critical sectors. More testing in Indiana is coming available. Over the next several weeks, Indiana will deploy 50 new public testing sites to support a goal of 100,000 new tests per month. In addition, the state will be using data from a study that will regularly test 5000 Hoosiers, randomly selected to participate in this one year study. This study can be used to predict how prevalent COVID 19 is in the general population and give more data to support the pace at which we implement the recovery phases.

So, what can we expect this summer and beyond? Without a vaccine, there will be a continued threat of infection. The advice is the same. We must continue to practice social distancing when practical. More important, avoid close, confined situations, and wear a mask, especially if you are at risk. Continued hand washing and disinfection is easy and a good health practice for any communicable disease.

Online meetings have gone mainstream! Continue to use virtual meetings for business, which also eliminates the expense and the need to travel as well.

We are not going to be back to normal this summer. We will, however, appreciate a bit less isolation, have more family time opportunities, and be able to enjoy a meal at one of our favorite local restaurants.

Will we have the Indianapolis 500, Kentucky Derby, college football, or just plain college? I don't have those answers. What I will say is, don't let up and we might!