

Rochester Emergency Management Committee
Wednesday, March 18, 2020
6:30 PM
Via Conference Call

Present on the call: Bonnie Bourne, John Champion, Kevin Dougherty, Rob Gardner, Pat Harvey, Doon Hinderyckx, Dr. Erwin Lange, Jan McCann, Sue Ribaldo, Vic Ribaldo, Kathryn Schenkman, Frank Severy, Terry Severy. Amy Wildt

1. Call to order and Opening Comments

Vic hosted the conference call and called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM. He noted the need for conference calling instead of an in-person meeting to adhere to necessary social distancing. He then provided opening comments noting that the focus of the meeting is on preparations for the arrival in Rochester of the Coronavirus pandemic. Though we welcome the opportunity to collaborate with neighboring towns and state and federal resources, they too are dealing with the problem so we need to be as self reliant as possible. The best estimate of onset of a surge at Gifford's ER is two weeks from now so we have perhaps that much time remaining to put as much preparation in place as we can. It is impossible to predict when a return to normal might occur but several reliable national sources estimate at least several months. So we need to think in terms of a marathon and not a sprint.

Problems we should expect include many people getting very sick, especially but not exclusively our elders; many people in at-home isolation; loss of employment and income; family disruption due to closed schools; curtailment of local businesses, and a psychological toll. We also need to be prepared to support and have back-up personnel for critical infrastructure like water, sewer, and road services, food supplies and fire service. Other critical infrastructure that may be affected are out our control, like fuel for heating, electricity and phone/internet services if they go down.

2. Social Distancing and Medical Care

Rob reiterated the need to act quickly and to reinforce social distancing throughout the town.

Kathryn advised that when the surge comes many people will be at home receiving nursing home level care, which will be disrupted if their caregivers get sick. She estimated about 30 such patients in the Quintown area that she knows through her work, plus more private pay patients at home. There need to be protocols for care givers serving multiple such patients who could introduce and spread the virus to these vulnerable patients.

Dr. Lange noted that if one gets the virus, you won't get it again in the same season but that the best estimates now are that 1/3 to 1/2 of the US population will get it. The fact that the virus is shed by non-symptomatic carriers helps push up the numbers of people. Gifford does not have test kits. At the Rochester clinic, staff work to keep people separated. People should call first if they have virus symptoms and they will be advised of what to do, which might mean meeting patients outside the clinic to avoid virus transmission.

If the hospital gets overwhelmed, and it could quickly go that way, then there is really nothing to be done for most people who want to go to the hospital. In that case they might be better off just

staying at home anyway, even if it means they die there. We need to keep vulnerable older people out of grocery stores. Volunteer shoppers and Meals On Wheels would be very important especially over the next 2 weeks or so.

Kathryn advised that we need to share publicly, perhaps in another mass mailing to the town as well as posting on social media, the limits of treatment to further reinforce and motivate people to practice social distancing. She, Dr. Lange and Rob will confer Thursday at 4:30 PM to work on such a statement.

3. Fire Protection

Kevin and Terry spoke about what the Fire Department is doing to protect the town by protecting its members. They have a supply of gloves; they won't send as many firefighters initially in a response; they are in touch with mutual aid partners; they canceled their last regular Tuesday meeting and will find other ways to meet; they are doing a lot of cleaning of the Fire House and equipment. This is brushfire season and they expect a number of calls for that. We would benefit from a no-burn rule, if people actually obey it. They will consider calling for such a rule.

4. Food access

Sue described work being done to arrange for food delivery to people at home in isolation and some of the complications with arranging for payment to Macs for food. Amy described what the school is doing to continue meal availability to students and delivery to homes via the bus routes. There was a call earlier today with Hancock representatives, Ruth ____ from the Food Shelf and Bonnie regarding what is being done and might be done to assure food access to the community. They will all meet soon to coordinate and put in place ways to assure food access. This is intended to benefit people in Hancock and Granville as well as Rochester.

5. Next Meeting

Vic will schedule the next meeting within a week. The audio on today's call deteriorated during the meeting. Amy recommended we try Zoom.

6. Adjourned at 7:30 PM

Respectfully submitted
Vic Ribaldo, Chairman