

## CURFEW PRESS CONFERENCE

October 29, 2020

Good morning and thank you for being here. I am joined here today by Deputy Mayor and Chief of Police Troy Davenport, City Council President Dennis Flores and the Director of the Pueblo County Department of Public Health and Environment, Randy Evetts.

I want to make two important announcements this morning detailing the efforts of the City of Pueblo to deal with the recent spike in cases related to COVID-19.

We have been carefully monitoring the infection rate in pueblo since our first case in March.

On a daily basis, we get information from the state health department on the results of testing in pueblo.

Over the last week there has been a tremendous spike in cases which has resulted in increased hospitalizations in Pueblo.

COVID-19 is growing exponentially in the City of Pueblo and the State of Colorado. We must redouble our efforts to slow the spread of the virus. We must do everything we can to keep our schools open, and our businesses open.

If we don't take this action now my fear is that we will see increased deaths and businesses failing. The City of Pueblo has invested more than three million dollars in our small businesses this year to help them deal with this pandemic. I want to protect that investment and the actions I am taking today will help keep them open.

As you know, Colorado has a COVID-19 dial that considers three metrics to measure the extent of the virus in a community:

- The total cases in the last two weeks
- Positivity rate of testing in last two weeks
- Whether hospitalizations from COVID-19 are increasing or decreasing

On all of these metrics, Pueblo is going in the wrong direction.



Here's where Pueblo stands as we face a third peak that's growing exponentially.

On October 1, our two-week positivity rate for tests was 1.4%. On October 27, it was 5.6%.

Another metric we look at is whether hospitalizations are increasing because of COVID-19.

Parkview Hospital has the largest number of COVID-19 cases since March. On Wednesday night there were 33 cases at Parkview. The number of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 at Parkview has tripled in the month of October.

We need to make sure both hospitals have the capacity to handle COVID-19 as well as other medical cases. Parkview Hospital is now stretched, and they have very little wiggle room. On October 27, there were only two ICU beds in Pueblo that were not occupied.

I'm deeply concerned about what COVID-19 is doing to our Hispanic community. Hispanics make up nearly 1 in 3 cases of COVID-19 in the state of Colorado. In Pueblo, while we don't know the rate of COVID-19 cases among Hispanics, we do know that with Hispanics making up 51% of our city population, COVID-19 is impacting the community.

I'm concerned how the exponential growth of the virus and a possible closure would impact those working multiple jobs to make ends meet, and those in our service industry where one positive case in a household causes financial strain.

Additionally, for the past month and a half, we have been sampling our wastewater in the seven basins in Pueblo. We test the wastewater in these basins and those tests tell us whether there is increased COVID-19 RNA from the corona virus. There is a correlation between increased COVID-19 RNA in wastewater and the number of individuals in Pueblo who will get sick with the virus. We have seen sharp increases in the COVID-19 RNA in our wastewater. It is an early warning system.

In total, the most recent numbers for Pueblo County from the state health department for the two-week incidence rate of cases per 100,000 population is 357.5. On October 1, it was 66 cases. 357 cases is well over the threshold to move to level 3 which is above 175 cases and if the numbers remain the same, we will be in a stay at home level. 350 is the threshold for Stay at Home.

As you know, Pueblo is currently at level 2 on the statewide COVID dial. However, the increase in cases and hospitalizations jeopardizes that status and suggests that we could roll back to level 3.

We have a very limited period of time to act or we will have more restrictions and may have to go back to staying at home full time.

If we enter the stay at home level, all but critical and essential businesses as defined by the Fourth Amended Public Health Order dated October 27, 2020, will be required to shut down.

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If we move to the Stay at Home level, most of our small businesses will shut down. I want to avoid that at all costs, but that decision is not up to me.

It is up to each and every one of us who want to keep our businesses open to do our part.

We know what has to be done to slow the spread of the virus, but not enough of us are doing it. We must wear our masks, even in our homes when persons outside our household are present. We must avoid large gatherings. A public health order prohibits gatherings in private homes to 10 people and not more than two households.

What we are facing is a public health disaster which threatens our lives and our economy. It requires that we take immediate action.

To save Pueblo's businesses, to save lives and to fight COVID-19, I am announcing two immediate actions that we are taking to slow the spread of the virus.

First, we are stepping up our enforcement efforts.

Since August, the City of Pueblo has had COVID-19 Enforcement and Compliance Technicians visiting local businesses to make sure they are aware of, and are in compliance with, the rules of our COVID-19 status. Most of our businesses have been bending over backwards to comply with the rules and to make sure that their customers comply. Despite education and multiple warnings, some businesses have failed to comply with health orders.

Last night, the Pueblo Liquor Board summarily suspended the liquor license of the Broadway Tavern for three days, October 30 – November 1, 2020. A hearing will be held next week to determine if further action should be taken. I have made it very clear that this course of action would be pursued for businesses licensed by the City of Pueblo if they failed to comply with the requirements of our COVID-19 status and variances. I wish this action was not necessary, but as our numbers continue to rise I would rather close one business for a few days than close all of our small businesses. I hope this is the only license that has to be suspended but if others fail to comply, summary action will be taken against them. We intend to step up our enforcement actions to slow the spread of the virus.

I also want to announce that I am imposing a two-week curfew for the City of Pueblo commencing at 10 pm Friday, October 30 through 5am Friday November 13, 2020. This curfew will be in effect every night between the hours of 10 pm and 5 am in the City of Pueblo. This means, no one may be out on the streets of Pueblo during those hours unless they are engaged in critical and essential activities as defined by Fourth Amended Public Health Order dated October 27, 2020.

I realize that this is drastic action but we need to spend these two weeks slowing the spread of the virus or Pueblo will move to level 3, which will decrease the capacity of business, and possibly stay-at-home which will close our businesses.

I expect that Puebloans will honor this curfew but if they do not, they will be cited for a class one municipal offense and may be fined up to \$1000 and put in jail for a year. I hope that it does not come to that but rest assured, if it means keeping our citizens safe and health and our businesses open those penalties will be imposed. Anyone found violating the curfew will be cited by the Pueblo Police Department.

Pueblo, this is a fight for lives and livelihoods. I'm calling on you to do your part, not just for the next two weeks but until we have won this war. Wear a mask with anyone outside your immediate family. Avoid all gatherings of 10 people or more. Even if you are in a small group, remain masked up. Get tested when you have symptoms and be helpful to contact tracers.

I'm not asking you to do this for me. I'm asking you do this for our businesses and schools.

Pueblo, for the next two weeks you need to fight COVID-19 at home. You need to fight it by not gathering to watch football or UFC. You need to fight it by wearing a mask when visiting a friend. You need to fight it by staying home when you are sick.

I'm asking you to avoid the casual and family gatherings that are spreading COVID-19. Our businesses and schools have done their part to provide a safe environment, now we all must do our part.

Let me conclude by saying that we will get through this together Pueblo. What kind of shape we are in at the end of this, and how many of our small businesses survive this pandemic, depends on us and what we do today.