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Alert #12 Board of Health Meeting Recap

The board met this morning to review the health rules on the mask rule, quarantine rule and Phase 2 reopening.

Matt shared the following information for consideration:

Gallatin County is experiencing an uptick in case load in the past weeks. At one point, we were down to 25 cases per 100K population which had been identified as the rate to reconsider rules. We are now over 35/100K again.

There are a few conditions in Gallatin County that contribute to having the highest case rates in the state.

- Gallatin has a younger median age, and the largest number of cases are in the 20's age group.
- MSU has 15,000 students with a large number of transient out of state students.
- The county's growth rate
- Largest tourism area and busiest airport in the state.

The vaccination program continues to prioritize the 1B+ population since there is still significant demand from that group.

- 30% of 1B+ residents have received their first dose.
- 80%+ of the 80+ year old population has received first dose, 60%+ of residents in their 70's.
- 17% of the eligible population has been fully vaccinated.
- The state allocation has grown to 4-5K doses per week with the state recognizing the demand here.
- The vaccine waiting list is at 10K names and growing.

The board voted to extend the mask rule

Isolation and Quarantine is an essential tenant of public health. It's useful to have the rule to reference with some who were not cooperative. If the rule was rescinded, they would still be bound to use this tool. Contact tracing would continue contact tracing and using isolation and quarantine if the rule were rescinded.

The board voted to rescind the Isolation and Quarantine rule.

Phase 2 reopening - Rescinding would mean no limit on group size, bars, restaurants, no requirement for social distancing, crowd size. Current rule expires 6/10. Matt offered suggested amendments to the current rule.

- Increase the maximum party size at tables to 8 people for indoor group events for restaurants, bars, coffee shops, bowling alleys, breweries, distilleries, and casinos: and
- Decrease the minimum distancing between bar stools to 3 feet.
- Capacity remains at 50%.
- Board had the option to extend, repeal, revisit the local rule, or do nothing (allow current rule to stay in place until June 10th).

The board voted to extend this rule with these amendments through May 10

Visitation in nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities, and assisted living

Matt suggested that we can consider working with facilities without the rule and the enforcement that the rule offers. It's concerning that we're not seeing the uptake in some of these facilities. We should not assume that 100% of the staff and residents in these facilities are vaccinated. Vaccination rates vary widely between facilities for staff and residents. Some that are close to 100% and some, where vaccination rates are closer to 50%. To rescind rule, Matt would still has health officer enforcement authority.

The board voted to rescind the visitation rule until May 27.