

# WSU-Pullman Community COVID-19 Pandemic Town Hall – August 19

## Live Unedited Transcript

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>> PHIL WEILER: Good afternoon everyone, welcome to the city of Pullman's second COVID-19 town hall meeting. My name is Phil Weiler, I am vice president for marketing and communications at Washington State University and I will be serving as our moderator today. I want to thank you all for joining us. We have an important panel of city and County and community leaders today, we will all be working together and have been working together closely for the past four or five months trying to be prepared in addressing the pandemic that is COVID-19. Let me take a second to introduce everybody and we can go ahead and get started. we are joined first of all by Pullman Mayor Glenn Johnson, thank you Mr. Mayor. We have Troy Henderson, director of public health, Scott Adams, chief officer of Pullman Regional Hospital. Bob Maxwell, superintendent of the Pullman school district. Gary Jenkins, chief of the Pullman Police Department. Mike Heston, chief of the Pullman fire department. And finally Kirk Schulz, president of Washington State University. Mayor, I would like to turn it over to you to make some opening remarks and then we can go ahead and get started.

>> GLENN JOHNSON: Thank you very much for joining us today, and what you see here are a number of people who are all working together but they represent some of the many people that are all working during this pandemic. And I do have to say that we have some tremendous cooperation going on in the Pullman and Whitman County area all working on this to make sure that our residents are safe from a safety standpoint, we want to make sure that our city workers are all safe so they can serve the residents we have, and a number of nonprofit agencies have stepped up, I am thinking of the churches that are doing food distribution right now. Everybody is working together to get us through this COVID-19 and we hope that it ends a lot quicker than some of the protections we are seeing right now. But from a city standpoint most people think of the 911 when you call for police and fire, we have our fire chief and police chief your today. But there are other people that are very much involved with helping us get through this, and we think of all of the different departments, for example maintenance and operation deals with our water service and with wastewater treatment. Those are also important but you don't see those very often. Our city Council meets on a regular basis and we are all try to do the best we can for our community. We have our finance and administrators all working to do the best that we can to make sure everybody is safe. And I must say that it has been fantastic working with Kirk Schulz as president of WSU. We have good communications and once in a while we text each other, give us some updates, he calls when we've got major

decisions. And I want to make sure it is very clear to everyone that WSU has made some very tough decisions recently, some that have been dictated by the pack 12 and the NCAA, and they have been tough decisions but every one of those decisions, the university does think about the community and I want to emphasize that. They have really thought about the economy. They tried to have obviously an in person graduation to try to help the local merchants. It couldn't be done. And we have seen football go from seven home games down to five home games, a full stadium down to 8000 or 10,000 people, and the most recent announcement last Tuesday. So I want everyone to know that we all are working together on this, and we will get through all of this. Phil?

>> PHIL WEILER: Thank you mayor. ., I would like to turn it over to you to see if you have any remarks before get started.

>> KIRK SCHULZ: Thank you, and welcome to the 300 people and growing that are watching us today on YouTube. I want to emphasize several key things that WSU is thinking about moving forward. The first is health and safety of our students, faculty, staff and community has been paramount for us, and that means we have had to make some very challenging and difficult decisions, moving to online instruction. As Mayor Johnson mentioned, the decision to not do an in person graduation. And I think the most recent thing that I still believe was the right decision for us to make was not having -- postponing fall sports including football, and when we did that especially for a college town like P Pullman and Rena how devastating I can be to the economy. You are counting on that football Saturday with thousands of people coming in and spending money and having a great time and enjoy the fantastic hospitality they are proud of in Pullman. So we did make these decisions without acknowledging and understanding the negative impacts it will have economically on our community. But at the end of the day we felt that we had to be really careful to make sure we don't overwhelm our health care system, that we are being responsible as people come back, that we are holding gatherings that make the most sense for us, but that we are being careful because I want to look ahead in six months or eight months or a year and be in a really strong position for our community, the university, and everybody working together. I will say as well almost all of the people on this call are involved and engaged and working together around COVID-19 related issues, whether it is students in their community, restaurants, businesses, whatever types of things we are trying to do, we appreciate the relationships we have with our public health officials, with Scott and the team at Pullman regional Hospital, and we are just going to keep working together. And finally I wanted to emphasize that certainty has become a hallmark. I wish I could look in my crystal ball and see where we would be two months from now, three months from now, and I know that frustrates citizens and business owners, it frustrates local residence. How come the university doesn't know more, how come they are talking about this more? We are using the best data we have at that time we have it and making the best decisions that we have, and I think sometimes the difference between a visionary and a goat can be the slimmest of margins, and we are trying to make sure that we look back in two years and say the university, the community, all of us working together made the best decisions they could for the overall health of our community

and that is what we are going to continue to focus on. So I appreciate the opportunity to be here and answer questions and hear from my colleagues, but please know we are being careful. We want to keep health as a number one thing for our community, and we are here to partner. Where your mask, socially distanced, wash your hands. That is our mantra and we will continue to repeat that is often as possible and we will continue to try to demonstrate that is a leadership team when we are out and about in the Pullman community. So Go Cougs, go homes, and we are Pullman proud is always.

>> PHIL WEILER: Thanks, President Schulz. A little bit of housekeeping before we move on, we have had a number of people who have submitted questions in advance via email. Thank you to all of you have done that. We have actually more questions than we will be able to tackle today. We will do our best, there's a lot of important information that we want to be able to share with everyone to make sure we all have a good understanding of where we are as a community in this particular outbreak. Also note we do have the live chat function operational in YouTube. I will do my best to monitor that and if there are questions I pull out of there, I will address those to the right folks as well. Let's go ahead and move on. I would like to turn the first question to Bob Maxwell, our superintendent. There was a decision that was made for the Pullman school district and I would like, Bob, if you can tell us what that was and what went into that decision making process.

>> BOB MAXWELL: Absolutely, thank you Phil and thank you for this opportunity to be with such a distinguished group and talking with our community. The decision to go distance-learning was not an easy one obviously. We would all probably have preferred to have school in person. However, given the unprecedented time of this pandemic, we have to keep in mind the safety of our students and staff in mind first and foremost and our community. So we have been working with the health department, all summer long and meeting and taking a look at the guidance and protocols and the development of our reopening plan. We were tasked by the office of superintendent of public instruction to develop a plan both for in person, what we call hybrid with some distance learning, or full on distance learning, and we have a plan that contains both. Unlike the spring we have had an opportunity to have at least six weeks to plan is time for distance learning rather than two days. So we will see a much different distance learning expertise for our students and our families. That will be a combination of synchronous life teaching as well as asynchronous recording. There will definitely be better communication anymore succinct communication, and set times for interventions as well. We will have daily attendance, and our teachers have been spending a lot of time in training and preparing so we can provide a more robust learning experience for our students and our families. So it has definitely been a journey. Nothing in my education career ever prepared me to plan to do online learning when four 100+ years it has always been in person. So we are going to go and start school August 26, we are ready and we will be adapting as we needed as we go on this journey.

>> PHIL WEILER: Bob, I want to echo one of the things you said and this is something that resonates with me at Washington State university. You made a comment that back in March you had to turn on a dime and move from face-to-face to distance-learning and one of the advantages now is we have got more time to prepare. I know that is something that we at Washington State university are pleased that we've got a little bit more time to prepare for that change, and I know that your teachers are going to be able to do an even better job this fall now that they have had time to figure out what that means to have to go to that distance-learning. So thank you. I would like to turn to Troy. I know that obviously COVID-19 is a public health emergency. This is what the public health department exists to deal with. So Troy, could you give us an update, a status update on what is -- where are we with COVID-19 and Whitman County.

>> TROY HENDERSON: Sure. For the last 10 days we have seen a noticeable decrease in viral activity which is a great sign. We hope to see that continue into the future. Testing for COVID-19 has functioned well for about the last four months and we are very, very fortunate in Whitman County that our turnaround times have very frequently been about 24 hours. We have seen a bit of an uptick in the Pullman Moscow area and I am sure that everyone is aware that [can't understand] County has also seen an uptick as folks migrate back into those communities, but we are well-positioned to address any increase. The state of Washington as a whole has seen a steady decrease in caseload over the last several weeks, so there is some positive signs both locally and statewide, and as Mayor Johnson mentioned, there was a lot of elected leaders, business leaders and the health care community, and leadership at WSU who were all working together to respond as effectively as possible. I will point out and that the number one determinant for any community to be successful in controlling COVID-19 is individuals making those wise choices that President Schulz mentioned. If you wear a mask, social distance, and wash your hands, and put in a few [can't understand] practices we can keep driving those numbers down.

>> PHIL WEILER: Good advice, thank you. Troy, if you don't mind I will follow up on something you said because this references one of the questions that we received in advance. You mentioned [can't understand] County and obviously Pullman and Moscow are so close to one another, there is so much movement between the two communities and the two counties. We had a person wonder is there any kind of coordination being done with [can't understand] County, are we in contact with our colleagues over there?

>> TROY HENDERSON: We are. We get test results for folks who live in that county and they get test results for folks who live in Whitman County. So be sure that data almost in real time as we get it to help inform each other about positive test results. Also when there is close contacts, obviously folks in the Pullman or Moscow community often have close contacts in other communities, and depending on whether it is a work situation or how big a group, we generally ask the other County if they want to take the lead for the folks in their county and vice versa. So

there was a fairly large amount of cooperation specifically around case investigation and contact tracing.

>> PHIL WEILER: Good to hear, thank you. Next I would like to ask Scott, can you give us an update on how things are going at Pullman regional Hospital? I think we are all really proud of the quality of health care we have in our community and we know we will have to rely on you all if we do see outbreaks, so just curious where we stand right now.

>> SCOTT ADAMS: Thank you Phil, we are grateful to be included in this important conversation with the community and to be able to share an update with our activities as well as answer questions as we have time. I am impressed as we began dealing with the pandemic back in early March that amidst the anxiety and uncertainty that President Schulz referred to in the community, the community demonstrated its commitment to understanding of its commitments. And from those early days the concerns about economic impacts and the students and families and how they will manage their education for their children in the health care system was all brought together and those conversations have continued since that time. We are in unprecedented times and people are turning to the community and additional students, the nature of the pandemic continues to bring uncertainty to us. But we are gratified by the fact that through the commitment of our staff and physicians we feel pretty prepared to continue to be here to provide adequate care. We were just reminded that we remain a five-star hospital with patient experience and that means you can continue to expect that type of care and responsiveness as you have needs at the hospital. Gratefully what we have learned is that even though as Troy mentioned the virus continues to increase in Whitman County, very few people actually require hospitalization, and that's a good thing. Most people are recovering at home and a hospitalization rate in the county is really only about 1.5 percent. So if we continue to do the things that Troy and President Schulz have mentioned around masking and handwashing and social distancing and other good sense practices, we will continue to see lower results in testing positivity and hospitalization activity. If you need to be hospitalized, everybody should feel comfortable that they've got adequate protective personal equipment and we've got trained staff who continue to review procedures and activities around caring for isolation patients and how to assure that other staff and other patients are safe. We do have a great interconnection with the regional coordinating Council for health care services that helps us make sure that we know what the capacity is in the region. While we've got the capability to care for sick patients here, that may not be the best option given a particular situation. So we will be coordinating with them. Some patients may find that transferring to another facility, even to Spokane, might be the best option given the circumstances at the time. We have been able to develop a treatment protocol here in the hospital should we have the need to care for significant numbers of COVID-19 patients. Troy mentioned the value of testing, and we continue to have a focus on that in our efforts. The main testing every at the hospital right now is behind the hospital in the parking lot. It is behind the emergency department. And if you have a need to be cared for at the hospital, that is where you will get your test, and currently if you are having surgery or an endoscopic procedure or part of the rehab services or other types

of same-day care provided in the hospital, then you will go to that testing area to be tested prior to having those services. If you were in the emergency department and you have COVID-19 like symptoms, you will be tested. If you are a maternity patient, you will be tested. If you are an inpatient and there is suspicion that you may be positive for COVID-19, you will be tested. And gratefully when we are doing our in-house tests, those are things for patients already here in the hospital, we get a turnaround time in a few hours. When you are preparing to come to the hospital for an outpatient procedure, those tests as Troy mentioned are within a 24 to 36 hour time frame. And that is a really good marker by comparison with other places across the country, even in the state of Washington. We mentioned testing positivity. We report that every week on our website for the hospital testing we do. I think the county will begin reporting that countywide in the near future, but right now we have a hospital website., Positivity right here in the county or the hospital for the tests we do is 2.2 percent, and that compares to the state positivity rate of about 5.7 percent. So it continues to emphasize that good practices, continued commitment to masking and social distancing and handwashing, will help us keep this at a manageable level. Before we move on we want to remind everybody that we believe it is safe to be in the hospital and receive care here, and in your doctor's office is. All of the locations are doing many things to make it a safe environment. We have universal masking, we screen patients and visitors when they come into these locations. We limit the number of people who were in the hospitals or clinics that are not there needing care. So that's why we don't conduct in person meetings anymore. All of our meetings or by zoom and practicing appropriate physical distancing. We have shut down our volunteer program, [can't understand] is closed to the public and we no longer hold education classes here again to minimize the number of people who were in the hospital or in the physician offices who don't need care. As a final point, I just want to remind everybody that this is not the time to delay your care. We are seeing an increase in the severity of illness in the hospital and it is not necessarily Covid related. It is for reasons that people have felt onshore or unsafe around having follow-up care for the chronic illness or their continuing health concerns, so we encourage folks to continue forward with your preventive services. Get your immunizations, get your shots. Flu season is coming up. This is the time where if you have question the need for a flu vaccine, this is the time to do it and keep your community safe. And if all other options fail we want to remind folks that telehealth services are available in all doctors offices and clinics throughout the community. Thank you Phil.

>> PHIL WEILER: Thank you Scott, and I think that last item was really important. And I will emphasize it if I can. Folks do need medical care outside of COVID-19 and they should not hesitate to seek the care that they need because we want to make sure that people are keeping themselves safe and healthy, there are still illnesses in our community that have nothing to do with COVID-19 and those need to be addressed, so I'm glad you brought that up, thank you. Next I would like to turn to chief Jenkins. We had a couple of questions submitted in advance asking about what is happening with regard to enforcement, for lack of a better term, enforcement of the statewide proclamations around what we should be doing with regard to

COVID-19. I know, chief, that you actually issued a news release just this morning that address that issue, so do you want to spend a few minutes talking about what that news release said and what your department is doing with regard to enforcement and education.

>> GARY JENKINS: Sure, thank you Phil. We have seen an increase in the past few weeks of parties and gatherings. Prior to that we took a strictly warning and education approach when we came across violations or we responded to calls where violations were reported. But with the uptick in parties that we have been seeing without masks and social distancing and exceeding 10 people, we felt we needed to transition from education and morning only to include an enforcement element. So I did relates a news release today that is available on our website that lays out the potential violations that someone could be facing for these violations. They are either misdemeanors or civil infractions. Right now our focus really is on the party issue. That's where we believe there is going to be the greatest amount of potential exposure and impact. The violation of someone that hosts a party that includes any type of proclamation violations such as no masks, no social distancing, in excess of 10 people, it is a civil infraction with a \$250 fine, and then the fine goes up to \$350 for second and subsequent violations. Our whole goal is compliance. As Troy Henderson was saying, we have had really good experience with the individuals in the community complying with the proclamation requirements, and it has kept our numbers down. But what we are afraid of is if we start to see an increase in these, particularly parties, that that will turn these numbers around. So we want everyone to be compliant and we will take enforcement action if necessary.

>> PHIL WEILER: Thank you chief, and I think that is the message that members of the community have been hoping to hear. I think there is some justifiable anxiety. We have seen what has happened at other college campuses across the country where students and did not follow the social distancing and masking proclamations and got together for parties and we saw outbreaks as a result. So thank you. I would like to turn out to chief Heston if I could. I know, chief, that in the fire service interagency cooperation is the lifeblood of the work that you all do, and I have to imagine the same holds true for COVID-19. Did you talk a little bit about the work that is being done around working with your other agencies in the region to address this, and also what do your crews do when they get a call, a medical call, how do they prepare for themselves going into a person's home on a medical call.

>> MIKE HESTON: Thank you Phil, and thank you for the opportunity here as well. Working with other agencies we have been having daily and weekly meetings, and some also monthly, seeing what the best practices are out there, updating our policies, looking at statistics and seeing where the hotspots are and what kinds of personal protection equipment we need and how to secure that, and making sure we have enough for the future, and providing any help to our neighbors if they need that as well. As far as our response to Covid, we have been protecting ourselves even more with different levels of personal protection, masks, goggles, gowns, boots, and those types of things, especially to the known and suspected addresses with these patients. Dispatches asking key questions at the beginning to see if we can screen some of these patients

to give us a heads up, and we especially focus on a long-term health care facilities to make sure we are protected when we go in there because we don't want to be spreading that. And we also limit our cruise, how many people descend into different scenes, and if we can make personal contact with folks on the outside instead of just rushing in like we normally do. And there were some different things that you will see from us as well.

>> PHIL WEILER: Great, thank you very much. Bob, I would like to turn to you if I could. We talked a little bit about the fact that your teachers are ramping up for distance learning, and I'm wondering if there was any support we are able to give to students who might not have the technology they need at home to be able to connect online and take those courses.

>> BOB MAXWELL: Absolutely, thanks Phil. We are doing a number of things and some of those continue from what we learned in the spring. This year we will be issuing chrome books for each student so they have the technology available to work at home, or if we are in a hybrid situation both at home and school, they will be able to take that home. So each student who needs one will be receiving a chrome book, and in addition we are continuing to ramp up our efforts to increase connectivity of families that do not have Internet access. So we are working with those individual families, and in some cases we are able to provide a mobile hotspot. We are also working with the state to obtain some funding for students and families that qualify for free or reduced lunch to receive the funds to pay for their Internet bill each month. So we are still waiting for specific information on that, but once that comes we will make that known to our families who qualified for that particular program. So again if we do have families out there that are lacking Internet connectivity, please contact your building and they will get in contact with the district office and we will take a look at what we can do to help make sure that students are connected and able to access distance learning.

>> PHIL WEILER: That's great news, thank you very much, I am glad to hear that we are able to provide support to those families who may not have the computers or the connectivity necessary to make sure that their students remain successful. I would like to turn out to President Schulz if I could. I know, Kirk, that you made a decision a number of weeks ago now to change our delivery method, and I think a lot of people are aware of it but perhaps not everyone. Could you talk a little bit about what the original plan was for the fall semester and how things have changed in recent weeks.

>> KIRK SCHULZ: Sure, Phil, and thank you for the question. We were one of the first universities to come out in the late spring and talk about that we really wanted to have an in person experience for our students this fall. We had a tremendous number of our employees working with folks in the community trying to get ready to bring students back to campus and residence halls and apartments and those different types of things, have classrooms with appropriate social distancing, masking, all of those different types of things and really have that in person experience. And what happened was a few weeks ago a couple of vice presidents were talking about you know, things just aren't feeling exactly the way we would like to, and when I started going around and asking our colleagues how many of you think that if we bring

everybody back we will still have everybody back at Thanksgiving, and to a person they said no, it's just not going to happen. And after seeing the disruption that occurred in the spring where we had people on campus, they went away for spring break, we said don't come back, and how that privet -- I am proud of how everybody did, but it was still disruptive for students and families and things like that, and we decided it is better to make the decision now and not have people come back then it would be to be back for two or three weeks and do what the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a couple of other institutions are doing, who had students back in one case for a week and have already had to make that decision that they are going to go to online instruction and send people home. So it was a careful process, we worked really hard to bring everybody back in a safe manner, and what we just didn't think -- we just in think we could do it, and we also wanted to give our faculty and staff time to prepare and not do it at the last minute where people are scrambling around. I know a lot of people are disappointed, a lot of our families are disappointed, and a lot of Cougs and future Cougs are disappointed because they wanted that experience, and I know some people are worried about if we do this does that mean now in the future people will not value that residential experience, and actually we are finding the opposite. People value that ability to move somewhere, to be an independent young adult, and do classes but do all of the other things that are associated with an educational experience at a public land-grant research university. So I think instead of demeaning the importance of that in person instruction, what we will wind up doing is seeing a real hunger to return to that as soon as possible. I think much like Bob is probably sing with their K-12 system is people want that interaction and evaluate, and this is seen as this is okay but it's not quite what we have in mind in the long run.

>> PHIL WEILER: Thank you. Mayor Johnson, I've got a question for you. I know that this is a difficult time obviously for everybody across the country and around the world. People are losing jobs, they are having hours cut. There was a real concern about the social safety net, I guess. Can you talk a little bit about what we are seeing in the Pullman region with regard to issues around food insecurity or homelessness. Are there services in place to help people if they are experiencing challenges caused by Covid?

>> GLENN JOHNSON: There are a number of different agencies in the community, committee action centers, and at one I have the privilege of serving on the board. We just had a board meeting recently and try Henderson was on that board for a while. But he is right now not seeing a number of homeless cases. However he has seen a number of families at risk of eviction that the moratorium has saved. And so community action center does have rental assistance and they have stepped up in a number of categories like that. Also the community action center has a new apartment complex called the Riverview complex. It is actually behind the hospital. And that comes on board on September 1, and there will be rooms there for families that are basically homeless. We do have on Davis way another transition housing, but that has a time limit to it. The one at the Riverview Apartments actually does not have a time limit. People can go in there especially if they are homeless. But when you take a look at all of the different agencies, Pullman child welfare, some of the agencies in Colfax, they are all

stepping up right now. And we have had from the university, Jamie [can't understand] came up with an idea and working with the university on Pullman serves it forward were a number of people donated cash cards where people could go to different restaurants to keep the restaurants going and also help a number of people in the community. I know our church, Trinity Lutheran, is working with second harvest, and they have enough food for 250 families that we deliver between 11 o'clock and 1 o'clock tomorrow at Trinity Lutheran, so there is another opportunity where second harvest is working with churches. There's all kinds of people working together, but the quarantine, what I talked to Jeff Guyette, the Executive Director of the community action center, he said the food plaza when first Covid hit and we had people stay home and stay safe, probably about 60 different families came through for food. Now he is seeing it is roughly around 30 or 35 families, and he said normally before Covid that was about 25. So people are stepping up and we have a number of different agencies that are all helping together, and that is the beauty of this community. When we see people hurting we all step up and we work together.

>> PHIL WEILER: Thank you, I agree. I am heartened to see that members of the community are doing what they can to make sure we all get through this together. Troy, I am going to address this question to you and it may also be a question for Scott, but this was something that had come up in the chat session. There is some confusion about what it takes to get a COVID-19 test. Do you require a doctor at this order, what is the process if people have concerns that they might be ill?

>> TROY HENDERSON: That's a good question and part of why there is confusion is because the requirements have changed over time. This is a novel new disease. Our resources at the beginning were tremendously limited in regards to testing. So those first couple of months it was really difficult to get a test. Our testing capacity was way below where it needed to be. We are in a much better place today, and Scott can fill in some of the things, but my understanding is it does take a doctor's order, but if you have symptoms you can generally get that at the testing location. If you are in close contact is determined by the health department, the health department can get the doctor's order for the close contacts to be tested. So if you have a reason to be tested other than just the worry, it should be too difficult to get a test, and the availability is good throughout the county and that is best measured by the positivity rate that Scott mentioned earlier. We have generally been around 2 percent positive for the last four months in Whitman County, and that metric has some problems in that negative tests aren't all required to be reported. But we do get the numbers from the three largest testing facilities, and a 1 or 2 percent positivity rate and that tells you more than anything that you have a good amount of testing in your community. The positive caseload for 100,000 is a better metric for the viral activity in the community, but the positive case rate is a strong indicator of whether or not a community has an ample amount of testing. And we have in Whitman County for at least the last three and a half or four months.

>> SCOTT ADAMS: Phil I will go ahead and add to what Troy said, testing at the hospital and that medical offices for student health and the WCU athletics still all require some provider. And under state law providers also include dentists. If you are going to be having dental procedures and you've got concerns, your dentist can also write orders. But right now orders are required to receive any testing. As Troy mentioned, there are plenty of options for how people can obtain that order. The health department is able to do it as well as other provider remedies. I would just add that one of the things people can do from a self-evaluation standpoint is if they are only showing minor symptoms, then running out to get a test may not be the first thing they need to consider. Doing some self quarantine and seeing things progress might be an equally acceptable option that could produce a result that does not require a test. So again, using some good self-evaluation options in addition to pursuing testing can help us maintain our availability of resources for the community.

>> PHIL WEILER: And I know that if a Washington State student who happens to be here in Pullman does feel ill and they go to our Cooper health services and the need is for a test to be done, that is done I believe that Pullman regional Hospital, is that correct?

>>SCOTT ADAMS: That is correct and we are grateful and happy to do that. We see that is a significant part of the service and responsibility to the community. So anybody that has an order that comes of the hospital, they will go through the process and we will draw a sample and submit the test.

>> PHIL WEILER: Great, thank you. And I have to say for me that is another good example of the community and the university trying to work together hand in hand. We have the ability to provide health care through the cougar health services but we rely on the regional hospitals to extend that care when it gets beyond what we can do ourselves, so thank you for doing that. The next question I am going to address both to chief Heston and chief Jenkins. We alluded to this a little bit when Troy was mentioning that the situation has changed around testing. I know another concern we all had at the beginning of this Covid outbreak was the availability of personal protective gear. We did receive questions from the community who were worried that perhaps our fire service and law enforcement personnel did not have access to the equipment that they need. , Two of you perhaps give us an update, do you have the equipment you need and are you able to respond and properly protect your staff?

>> MIKE HESTON: Thanks Phil, I will go first. We do have enough protective equipment, and for a while depending on how many calls we were going on, we started putting some other contingencies in place like using some of our breathing apparatus mask with filters just in case we started to get low. Then we started working with our emergency management at the county which has access to state resources and we started getting in resources from the state through the county to us. Right now we are stocked up very well for the future and we just need places to store the stuff, but we have quite a bit and we have backup plans in case we run low again, so we feel we are in good shape.

>> GARY JENKINS: And just a quick add onto that, we had a number of N95 masks to start with that we had in stock from previous times where we had smoke from fires in the region that we had available for our staff and the public. And then working through Whitman County emergency management, they were able to get more supplies from the state. We also had members of the community volunteer to make masks for not just the police and fire staff but also for all city staff. So we have a lot of masks available for our city staff so that those staff members that are coming to work can be safe as well.

>> PHIL WEILER: Thank you both. President Schulz, the question for you. This was something that came in again via our online portal. Folks were asking what the enrollment numbers are going to look like for fall, 2020. Obviously we have six campuses across the state and I know that we don't release formal numbers until the 10th day of classes, but do you have a sense across the system what our enrollment numbers look like at this point?

>> KIRK SCHULZ: Phil, thanks, great question. And we aren't going to know a lot for another two weeks until we see what happens, and part of that is in the past we could have predicted today with about 99 percent exactly what those numbers would look like, but our predictive models aren't very good. We expect we may be down a couple of percentage points, single-digit percentage points over where we thought we would be. But if you go back three or four months there were a lot of places predicting that we would be down, public higher education, 20 or 30 or 40 percent. We are going to be pretty close to where our enrollment targets were for the Pullman campus and a lot of other campuses are doing late improvements as well. So I expect our numbers will be solid. They probably aren't going to be the largest we have ever had, but on the other hand we are not seeing the drastic downturns that some of the pundits were predicting in the middle of the Covid stuff, shall we say, in April or May.

>> PHIL WEILER: Yes, I would agree, it was not that many months ago that the pundits were all saying it's going to be 20 percent down across the board, unfortunately for us I think that is not the case. If I could I want to piggyback on another question we have received. A lot of questions about how many students are going to be in our residence halls. I know our vice president of student affairs shared information earlier today about what the capacity rate is and how many folks we have in there. Do you have that information handy?

>> KIRK SCHULZ: Yes Phil, I do, it's amazing. Our residence halls are going to be at about 15 percent capacity, that is 15 percent capacity. So if people are concerned that somehow we are cramming lots of people in the residence halls and we don't have room to do that safely, and I give a lot of credit to Vice President Mary Jo Gonzales center staff to set a clear criteria about what it would take to be able to move into a residence hall room. And as a reminder to our community out there, we have students from outside the United States. They don't have other options sometimes were to live. We have students with housing and securities were a residence hall for them is a much better environment for them to be in then maybe other options that they might have or might not have. So we are very careful about that. Students had to show real need or a real reason why they had to be in the residence halls, and we really

stuck to that. That being said, just like in our local community, that means that we take some pretty big financial hits over dollars that aren't in there because we've got buildings, we've got bonds we are paying on those, all of those different types of things. So we have been careful and we want to make sure that those students are safe in their classwork and things like that, but at the same time that is the number where it is. And if people hear something that is much different than that, I checked right before this to make sure I have the most accurate number from Dr. Gonzalez.

>> PHIL WEILER: Thank you. I was helpful you had that number handy and if you didn't I did as well, but I didn't want to catch you off guard. I would like now maybe to turn back to Troy if I could. Troy, I know that I certainly have heard a lot in the media about referencing things like isolation and quarantine, and honestly I guess I am not clear on the difference. Could you talk a little bit about what is the difference between those two terms, what happens if you end up having -- if you are tested and you are determined to be positive, what does that look like for the patient?

>> TROY HENDERSON: Sure. Isolation and quarantine are effectively the same and that you stay away from other folks so that if you are sick or you may become sick, you don't infect others. The technical difference is isolation is for someone who is symptomatic, that is folks are COVID-19 positive. And quarantine are for folks who do not have symptoms but may develop symptoms, so we want to keep them away from other folks as well. And there was a little bit of difference in the timeline. Quarantine is for 14 days, isolation is for 10 days or until symptoms clear. And we generally ask for folks who can isolate or quarantine at home to do so. And there are ways you can do that even if you are in a residence with a roommate or with your family. If your residence is large enough, and especially if you have a separate bathroom where you can keep a part. But for those folks who don't live in a situation where they can quarantine or isolate at home, and especially if they live with another vulnerable person, we do have some quarantine isolation rooms available for folks in local motels and the health department can help coordinate that.

>> PHIL WEILER: Thank you, that's good information. The next question I have I think is for Scott, if I could. This was something I saw earlier in our chat feature or chat function. Folks are wondering just what kind of capacity do we have. Let's say we do have people who need hospitalization. You mentioned there have been very few hospitalizations if any to date, but if we did what kind of capacity to be have?

>> SCOTT ADAMS: That's a great question and an understandable area of interest and even of some concern in some regards. As we in the early stages of the pandemic try to understand what it would take and what our capacity required, like so many things we started at one end of the spectrum thinking how will we take care of anybody that shows up to realizing we had to use our own resources and capacities in the way that would be safe for our patients and use the regional capacity as an additional tool to help us make sure we are providing the best care. So it's really hard to put a specific number on it. We've got a section of the hospital that is

designated as the Covid patient section, but it's got a six bed capacity. So it could be as high as six patients perhaps if they were all more moderate in their disease and not necessarily on ventilators, and if we had all of the sick patients with Covid or other illnesses on ventilators that number would be lower because that is a much more intense level of care. So when we find ourselves in circumstances that we have concerns about it pushing our capacity to provide safe care, that's when we draw on the regional resources, whether it's just another hospital close by or a larger facility in Spokane or central Washington or even down in the Tri-Cities. So all of that is in place to make sure that people have confidence that you can come here, we will understand what your needs are, and we will get you to the right place for care. Hopefully that is here in Pullman but if the circumstances are such that that is not the best thing for you and your needs, we will find the right place for that to happen and make sure you get there safely.

>> PHIL WEILER: Thank you. Bob, I have a question for you. I know there are meals served to students in the school buildings and if we don't have students in those buildings is there a way we can provide meals for those students who need them and really rely on the school to help with that nutrition?

>> BOB MAXWELL: Yes we do. We already have plans in motion to provide a very similar service like we did in the spring. So we will be serving breakfast and lunch at each of our school sites, as well as establishing distribution sites across our district boundaries where we will be taking meals, breakfast and lunch to go, out to the community where students qualify for lunches and breakfasts can pick those up. We are also exploring the ability for students that may wish to purchase a meal to preorder and they can either pick those up at the school or at a distribution site that we will advertise as soon as school gets started. So we will be serving breakfast and lunch and we are looking at the pre-ordering option for students that may wish to purchase a breakfast or lunch as well.

>> PHIL WEILER: Great, thank you. And if you don't mind I will piggyback on another question that came in through the chat function that had to do with K-12, and this was a parent who was wondering is there a process that we will follow to determine when it is safe to go back to a face to face learning environment, so for example, is there a way at some point in the spring we might determine whether we can go from distance learning to face to face?

>> BOB MAXWELL: That's a great question and we are actually working on a communication and a process called return to school stages. That will be in alignment with the Department of Health decision-making tree matrix. So it is something that I will be, as soon as we have it in a more final draft, I will be talking with Troy and the county health department to review that. So we are planning on what conditions it would take in order for us to move back to a hybrid model or full in person instruction and trying to link that with some specific metrics as well. Obviously our goal is to get back to in person as soon as we can. That said, we want to make sure it is safe for our students and our staff, and we don't want to have to keep moving back and forth between in person and distance learning. So we want to make sure we have enough time to make sure that the number of cases is stabilized at a low enough number and remains

there for a particular amount of time so it is safe to bring back students and staff for in person services.

>> PHIL WEILER: Terrific, thank you. President Schulz, I have a question for you. We have some folks were wondering has there been any connection or coordination between Washington State university and the university of Idaho. Obviously the two schools are about eight or nine miles apart and as I mentioned earlier we do see a lot of traffic back and forth between the two communities. Can you talk a little bit about any kind of interaction between the two schools?

>> KIRK SCHULZ: Certainly, I am in communication with President green, and when we elected to move from an in person format to a remote format he was one of the people I called just to let him know the decision we were making and why. We had a meeting that was myself, Mayor Johnson as well, and our colleagues at the university of Idaho to talk about regardless of whether somebody is in person or not, we are still going to have students and people in our community and what can we do to jointly work together to talk about wearing masks, social distancing, those kind of things. We see the border there and we understand there may be some political differences between the two states, but the fact of the matter is people go back and forth. They eat at restaurants and do retail shopping in different communities and there was a lot of that movement, so we want to coordinate where we can, and I think Troy mentioned there was a lot of cooperation in the public health sector in other places as well. So we are communicating back and forth. Each of us is doing a little bit of a different pathway right now, but the bottom line is we are all committed to keeping our community as safe as possible and having that standard kind of messaging that our town is doing, the universities are doing, and our region at large is doing.

>> GLENN JOHNSON: Andover cities are talking back and forth. I have had a chance to thank the mayor for a number of times of stepping up because that is not what Idaho is doing, but he required masks and social distancing and it was brave on his part, and I do appreciate what he has done. We've had a number of conversations the same way.

>> PHIL WEILER: I would agree, I think that the mayor of Moscow has been a great partner from what I have seen. Phil, I have a question for you about the various phases of what the governor has built up for the communities in Washington. Whitman County I believe is in a modified phase 3, if I'm keeping track of our box scores. We received a question about what does it take to go from where we are in three to a phase 4 and what is a phase 4 mean.

>> TROY HENDERSON: That's a good question. We are in phase 3 and everyone who was in phase 3 had phase 3 modified across-the-board by the governor, primarily in that he lowered collections of folks from 50 down to 10. The governor has also tabled what phase 4 would be until the state gets in a better place. So local health jurisdictions have not received guidance yet from the state, and the governor's safe start plan is his directive and we are awaiting that. I will tell you phase 4 which is the final plan phase for the Covid outbreak is not all clear. It's going to be back to normal as we can still be realizing that Covid is still here. So there is a lot that is not

known about phase 4, but I anticipate that phase 4 will still be a request that folks social distance when they can, don't get together in large groups if they can avoid it, spread out when they can wear a mask as much as they can. I think wearing masks may become a more normal part of our society like it is in some of the Asian countries, and it not only helps protect us from COVID-19 but it has the potential to really reduce the influenza burden we see each year as well. So I think the new normal will not be like it was a year ago.

>> PHIL WEILER: Well, unfortunately I agree with you, I think the new normal will be different. We are almost at the top of the hour. What I would like, Mayor Johnson, if you've got any closing remarks for us before we run out of time.

>> GLENN JOHNSON: I just want everybody to know that the city has stepped up in so many different categories to make sure that you have a safe environment here. And I want to say something for public transit because public transit has been affected obviously by the school district when they are going to be in person. We have the trippers that have moved on the same thing with university students and staff going to the campus. However I want you to know that in the past a 40 foot bus would hold maybe 60 or 70 passengers, they have enough socially distanced, they clean the bus and only allow 10 people on that Pullman transit. They clean it all the time and that is safe too. So I want everyone to know that Pullman transit has stepped up not only in cleaning and social distancing but also in the messaging. If you see some of our transit buses, they tell you wash your hands, stay six feet apart. We've got that message out that too. So I want the public to know that we are all working together and we certainly appreciate this town hall today and thank you very much for allowing us to be a part of that.

>> PHIL WEILER: Thank you mayor. I would like to thank all of our panelists. I appreciate you spending time, I think it's important for us to be able to hear from you all, the experts on where we stand with regard to this pandemic. I also want to say a special thank you to the staff from Washington State university's academic outreach and innovation unit. They are the technical wizards behind the scenes to make this work for us and whenever we do what I greatly appreciate the work that they do. We have used them a number of times for Washington State university town halls as well and they always do a fantastic job, so thanks to that group. Most importantly want to thank all of you for joining us. I really do appreciate that you have taken time out of your day to make sure that you are informed. We will defeat this virus by working together. We need to remember to wash our hands, to wear our masks, we need to keep ourselves physically distanced, and we need to get our flu shots as flu season comes. I think if we all keep ourselves knowledgeable about this issue and take those very simple steps, we are going to be able to tamp this virus down and get us back to normal more quickly. With that, thank you very much. Take care and enjoy your afternoon.