



**WASCO COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
SPECIAL SESSION  
JULY 29, 2020**

This meeting was held on Google Hangout Meet  
Meeting ID: <https://meet.google.com/joo-mudn-vpm?hs=122>  
or call in to [1-502-382-4610](tel:1-502-382-4610) PIN: 321 403 268#

**PRESENT:** Scott Hege, Chair  
Kathy Schwartz, Vice-Chair  
Steve Kramer, County Commissioner

**STAFF:** Kathy Clark, Executive Assistant  
Tyler Stone, Administrative Officer

**Agenda Item – COVID-19 in Wasco County**

Chair Hege opened the session at 9:00 a.m.

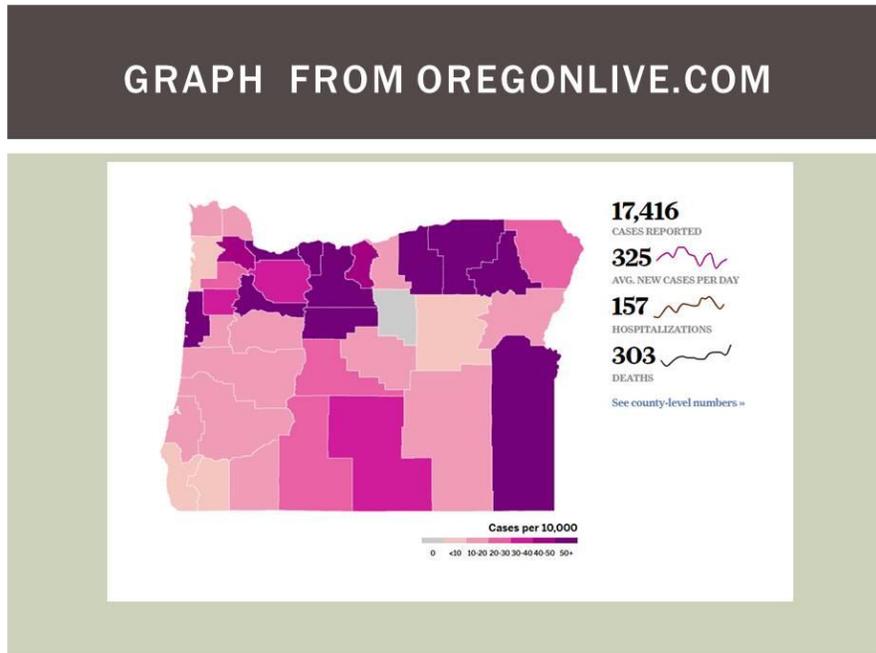
Public Health Officer Dr. Mimi McDonell reported that there have been 150 cases in Wasco County, 8 in Sherman County, 3 in Gilliam County and 151 in Hood River County. Yesterday in the State of Oregon there were 14 deaths. She said she wants to explain the numbers associated with recent data and has created a short PowerPoint presentation (included here) to help with that.

Dr. McDonell said that in terms of Wasco County, when we say we have 54 cases per 10,000 and 4% positive test results overall – that is starting in March. Looking at recent data, we are at 5.9% and that is an increase.

**WASCO COUNTY**

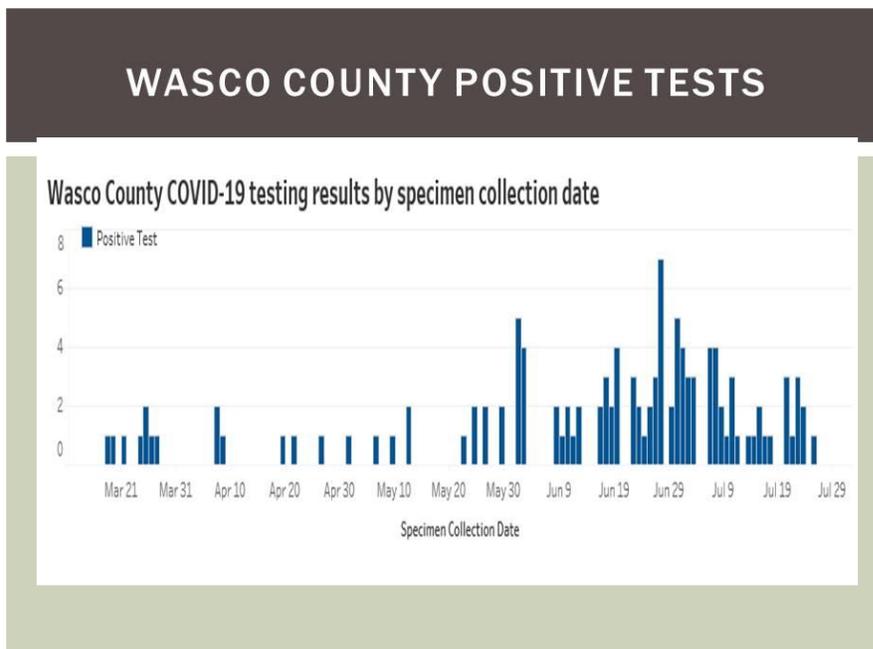
- **150 Confirmed/Presumptive cases**
- **54 cases/10,000 people**
- **4% test positive tests overall**
- **For week of July 19 to July 25 test positive rate is 5.9%**

She went on to explain that the deeper purple color on the map is for the highest percentage positive rates; Wasco County is deep purple – a little ahead of Multnomah County but way behind Umatilla or Malheur County.



She said that the map can be accessed on Oregon Live – hovering over each county will bring up data for that county.

Dr. McDonnell stated that the graph, which just looks at Wasco County, shows the progress of the pandemic within the County. She highlighted the spike in late June saying that the data does not include presumptive cases. It has gone down a bit so we may be doing a little better now. She said she is cautious.



Dr. McDonnell noted that the counties with small populations see greater impacts to their percentages even with one new case. Because of that, there may be modified guidance for them regarding school reopening; we should hear something about that in coming days.

<b>WASCO CASE RATE PER 100,000</b>		
<b>Week</b>	<b>Case Rate/100 K</b>	<b>Percent Positive</b>
<b>7/5/2020</b>	<b>93.7</b>	<b>6.1%</b>
<b>7/12/2020</b>	<b>52.5</b>	<b>2.2%</b>
<b>7/19/2020</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>5.9%</b>

<b>OREGON CASE RATE PER 100,000</b>		
<b>Week</b>	<b>Case Rate/100,000</b>	<b>Percent Positive</b>
<b>7/5/2020</b>	<b>45.9</b>	<b>5.9%</b>
<b>7/12/2020</b>	<b>57.1</b>	<b>5.4%</b>
<b>7/19/2020</b>	<b>52.3</b>	<b>5.1%</b>

Dr. McDonnell reviewed the recently released standards set by the Governor for the re-opening of in-person education.

## SCHOOL METRICS FOR RETURNING TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION

*County Metrics - metrics to be met three weeks in a row:*

- Case rate:  $\leq 10$  cases per 100,000 population in the preceding 7 days\*
- Test positivity:  $\leq 5\%$  in the preceding 7 days

- and -

*State Metric - metric to be met three weeks in a row*

- Test positivity:  $\leq 5\%$  in the preceding 7 days

Dr. McDonnell noted that we are well above the maximum standard but that does not mean that we cannot get there by September. We all need to keep following the guidelines - limiting hours for bars and restaurants, wearing masks, avoiding gatherings and observing social distancing and practicing good hygiene.

Vice-Chair Schwartz asked if the data can be extrapolated to estimate how many people may be walking around with the virus but have not been tested. Dr. McDonnell replied that if you take the case rate and positivity percentage there is probably a way to do some calculations. She said there are probably 40 or 50 people that are asymptomatic but it could be double that. The results in the data are only for those who have been tested.

Chair Hege said that there are a lot of questions around school reopening; many cannot be answered right now. He announced that next week we will have representatives from the local school districts to answer what they can.

Dr. McDonnell said that testing supplies and adequate turnaround time is still a challenge. Adequate staffing is also challenging. We are doing what we can and have added a little capacity for close contact tracing/monitoring and investigations. She said they are working with community partners such as The Next Door and Bridges to Health which is associated with the local Coordinated Care Organization; both are helping to increase capacity.

Vice-Chair Schwartz asked if we are being successful in contact tracing or are there still challenges in identifying where people are getting the virus. She also asked if there are any age groups with higher positivity rates or any other cohorts with higher rates. Dr. McDonnell said that the turnaround time for the testing is part of the contact tracing issue. To find contacts 7 days later is a long time for them to spread the virus before being quarantined. As far as the demographics, the State site did not have our county data available this morning. We have had from very young people, even babies, to 80 years old. There are a lot in the middle as well. We have some groups that are over-represented due to specific conditions. For instance Native Americans and the Latinx are over-represented; this is happening across the country. These populations are also most likely to have the worst outcomes.

Kate Wilson asked if we are considering waste water testing. Dr. McDonnell said larger areas are looking at that but we do not have that locally.

Rodger Nichols asked when MCMC would have their new testing machine. Dr. McDonnell replied that they are hoping to have it onsite in mid-August; also hoping to have the necessary supplies to use the technology. She said that she believes that MCMC is trying to get drive-up testing up and running within a week.

Chair Hege asked if One Community Health is still doing a lot of testing. Dr. McDonnell replied that they have had to cut back a little due to staffing and shortages of reagents. She noted that the cost of living in Wasco County and Hood River is making it difficult for people to live and work here. Hood River is the most expensive county in the state; Wasco County is number 4. If people cannot afford to live in the community at the rate of pay being offered, they will not take the jobs. That creates staffing shortages.

Chair Hege asked if the State is helping enough; is there any other help needed. Dr. McDonnell said that the State helps with the data dashboard. They have reached out to us but they have limited resources as well. There are other counties with much higher rates and the resources are going there.

Chair Hege said that we want to help where we can. He asked about hospitalizations. Dr. McDonnell reported that we have had hospitalizations but she is not sure what the current status is. She said that we have had zero to three at any

given time; MCMC reports it out at least twice weekly. Our capacity is adequate. Chair Hege asked about recovered cases. Dr. McDonell stated that the State definition of recovered is 60 days from the onset of symptoms; we use 30 days out from diagnosis. Right now, we have 60 recovered.

Chair Hege asked if any of the reported deaths are mischaracterized. Dr. McDonell replied that none of those reported to have passed from COVID-19 died from a car accident as may have been said. Anyone being diagnosed and passing will have COVID-19 on the death certificate along with any other contributing factors. There is a lot of confusion about autopsies. COVID-19 is a natural causes death and will not trigger an autopsy. The number of deaths due to COVID-19 may be a little high but not substantially so.

Vice-Chair Schwartz asked the average cost of a test. Dr. McDonell replied that it is about \$100; for the most part there will not be a cost to the patient as there are zero co-pays. She said that she cannot be certain for all plans but the rule is that there are no co-pays. She said that One Community Health has sliding scales for health care costs.

Rodger Nichols asked if Warm Springs is included in our numbers. Dr. McDonell responded that most of the reservation is in Jefferson County. If a Warm Springs patient actually resides in the portion of the reservation that is in Wasco County, they would be included in our numbers.

Public Works Director Arthur Smith asked if people not showing symptoms can be tested. Dr. McDonell replied that those who have had direct exposure to someone who has tested positive should also be tested. If you have symptoms, you should be tested. Just testing out of curiosity is not recommended.

Mark Bailey said Hood River County is releasing an "out of isolation" number to help identify cases that are active. He asked if there is a similar number for Wasco County. Dr. McDonell said that we go with 30 days; we do what we can to provide updated information.

Chair Hege pointed out that there was a 20-year-old in yesterday's death list and he has noticed other young people in the recent data. He thanked Public Health for their work and the thorough update.

Forest Service Area Manager Lynn Burditt reported that it became clear at last week's meeting is that across natural resource agencies we are having issues with garbage. They are working on a unified message with the help of The Dalles Chamber, The Port of The Dalles and Hood River County. There will be a press

release as well as short videos. She said she welcomes input. Ideally, people should recreate locally and if they do come in, they need to understand that we have some behavior expectations. The working group is getting contracts in place that will allow access to the Sandy River delta and Multnomah Falls. Klickitat County is getting local leaders to say why they wear a mask.

Chair Hege noted that our Youth Think has done similar videos and we will be talking about how to get the word out so people take this seriously. He said that by in large, people are trying.

Vice-Chair Schwartz said that she has a sense that when people are out recreating, some sites are pretty busy. She asked if social distancing is happening on the trails. She noted that where she has been, people are not masking outdoors at all. It is disconcerting when you are out on a trail and 5 unmasked people walk by.

Ms. Burditt said that some trails are remaining closed where social distancing is too difficult. We won't open the trail at Multnomah Falls for that reason. She said they are trying to educate people on how to safely leave the trail to allow distance when passing others – compliance is mixed. She said they wish they could do more. All the agencies and counties are encouraging people but it is difficult to manage. She said that if people become too assertive, there are some rules that can be enforced. It is also difficult to know if people recreating together are from the same household or not.

Chair Hege asked how high the risk is when just passing someone on a trail. Vice-Chair Schwartz replied that it is probably fairly low but what is disconcerting when passing them on the trail is if one of them sneezes or coughs. The risk may be low but if you are unlucky, the chances are 100%. Best practice would be to have the mask available and put it on when approaching others. She said she is in Washington State right now and does not see people wearing masks at the beach. The science is not 100% on this question.

Commissioner Kramer commented that we need to be careful when using the term "free" – someone will bear the cost.

Mr. Stone said that the Unified Command is really trying to anticipate what the school year will look like under various models. They are looking at broadband solutions and how we will serve our kids in a virtual environment. They have engaged with local internet service providers and the districts to figure out where

the needs are so they can hold brainstorming sessions on how to meet those needs.

Chair Hege thanked Unified Command for their work, noting that masks have been distributed to businesses and schools. He announced that the Board will meet next week and have people from the schools to talk about what is going on there.

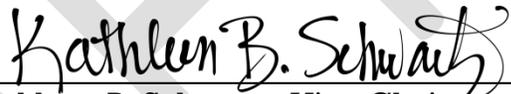
Chair Hege closed the session at 9:54 a.m.

Wasco County  
Board of Commissioners



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Scott C. Hege, Board Chair



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Kathleen B. Schwartz, Vice-Chair



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Steven D. Kramer, County Commissioner