Del Norte Triplicate

NEWS

Council approves mandatory testing for employees

September 10, 2021

All Crescent City employees will be subject to weekly COVID-19 testing by a unanimous vote of the Crescent City Council on Tuesday. The council also supported the governor’s mandatory mask mandate.

This after hearing the latest COVID update by Del Norte County Public Health official Aaron Stutz.

Dr. Stutz reported the vaccination rate within the city at 44%, with 111 new cases, pacing at between 30 and 40 new cases daily.

Stutz reported Crescent City at among the highest in the state when it comes to new COVID cases. Three people, according to Stutz have recently died from the virus, and two are on ventilators.

“I’d really like to push vaccinations," he said. "There’s even more great data that it’s very effective to prevent bad outcomes from Covid. If you have questions about it, call me. I’ll answer personally.”

He also made a plea to those considering events. “Please avoid large gatherings. Organizers: please cancel or make the events smaller.”

City Manager Eric Wier noted the grim presence of a refrigeration truck outside the mortuary.

“It’s beyond capacity at the funeral home which is overwhelmed by COVID deaths," Weir said. "We absolutely need it.”

Council Member Ray Altman asked Dr. Stutz to clarify, “Are all the deaths from people unvaccinated?’ Stutz confirmed, “Yes.”

Altman further asked if there have been adverse reactions to the vaccinations.

“There have been cases. They’re very, very rare," Stutz said. "Usually comorbidity with other conditions are present. Of the thousands of doctors who communicate about this there have been fewer than 10 who have had a severe reaction. I cannot think of a single documented death.”

During the meeting, Council Member Isaiah Wright briefly signed in and left. Wier confirmed that the councilor had tested positive for COVID as had members of his family. He had hoped to attend but became too ill to continue.

As to weekly testing for city staff, Human Resource Director Sunny Valero confirmed the process.

“If you’re a positive case or if you’re a close contact to a positive case and unvaccinated - you need to quarantine," Valero said. "If you’re vaccinated and have symptoms, you need to quarantine. If you’re vaccinated and have no symptoms after a close contact with someone who is positive, you don’t have to quarantine.”

The mandatory testing will be at no cost to employees and they can do it on their regular shift.

Mayor Pro Tem Blake Inscore said, “I don’t want to place a burden on our employees.”

Two members of the public briefly spoke against the mandatory testing. Thomas Barnes said, “I’m astounded by the lunacy of what you’re doing” and resident Roger Gitlin commented that taxpayers would be covering the bills for testing, “nothing is free.” Their remarks were countered by Council Member Ray Altman, “Don’t knock me for loving you and wanting you not pass away from COVID.”

Mandatory testing begins immediately and the council’s support for the governor’s mask mandate was also affirmed although Mayor Jason Greenough expressed his lack of support for fines levied against those who don’t comply. Numerous California cities have begun fines and penalties, including communities in the Bay Area and Los Angeles