Philadelphia eases dining and event restrictions

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health is easing more restrictions for restaurants at COVID-19 rates in the region common.

“We have more of these restrictions than is the average of Pennsylvania or New Jersey or Pennsylvania,” Health Commissioner Dr. Thomas Farley said during Tuesday’s virtual news update. “The changes will get us close in alignment with the commonwealth as a whole.”

Effective May 7, for indoor dining capacity will be increased from 25% or 50% of restaurants meet enhanced ventilation standards, to 50% or 75% meet enhanced ventilation standards. The maximum table size will be increased from 4 to 6, and there is no longer a requirement that everyone at the table be from the same household.

For outdoor dining, maximum table size will be increased to 10, which is the state limit. And for the first time in more than a year, the city is allowing indoor casino social events up to 25% of capacity, or a total cap of 75 people.

“If the case rates continue to fall, we will increase that cap from 75 to 150 per person as of May 22,” Farley explained.

“I want to encourage people who are having these high-risk events to do them outdoors as much as possible.”

He said COVID-19 outbreaks have occurred at weddings due to people dropping their guard because they are celebrating and starting mixing from table to table. Farley said outdoor gatherings and events will be able to increase their maximum capacity up to 25% of normal capacity and outdoor gatherings and events will be able to increase maximum capacity up to 50%.

“With these changes, I want to make this strong recommendation. Anyone participating in these higher risk activities should be vaccinated first,” Farley stated.

“The reality is there is still plenty of people in Philadelphia carrying this virus, so the risk that there will be someone in a setting with many people is that they are infectious with this virus.”

The ease on restrictions comes as the Health Department announced 469 additional cases COVID-19.

Activists march in honor of Walter Wallace Jr.

West Philly protest comes six months after police killed him

About 100 people gathered at West Philadelphia’s Malcolm X Park on Sunday to honor Walter Wallace Jr., the 27-year-old Black man who police fatally shot in October.

The event kicked off with a drum circle and chants of “Free Joe Wallace.”

“Tomorrow is six months to the day that police murdered Walter Wallace,’ said Yahiel N’go, who helped organize Sunday’s event.

“We want to make sure that people always remember what happened.”

Wallace lived life, his wife, Dom Wallace, who wanted the event to reflect his husband. However, the atmosphere was celebratory and family-friendly, with groups offering free food, books, and clothing. There was even a bounce house for children.

“Wallace was a symbol of Blackness, so it’s a Black people, liberation, justice. Everything he stood for,” said an attendee.

Wallace was in the middle of a mental health crisis when his family called police asking for help. When officers arrived at his apartment, Wallace was holding a knife and walking toward officers while his mother tried to deter the situation.

Less than a minute from arriving on the scene, Officers Sean Matarazzo and Thomas Munz opened fire, killing Wallace. The shooting was caught on video by a bystander as well as a body worn camera later released by police, and was followed by protests calling attention to police brutality.

To date, no criminal charges have been filed against Matarazzo and Munz. A joint investigation between the Philadelphia Department of Police and the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office is pending.

In the meantime, the PPD has not disciplined or fired either officer from duty.

Many people might not know about the moments before Wallace’s death, but it is important to know who Wallace was as a person. The demonstration at Malcolm X Park aimed to shed light on how Wallace’s life and the manner he was shot in.

DA candidates discuss racial bias at forum

Mount Airy neighbors groups host virtual event

The Philadelphia district attorney candidates addressed racial issues in the criminal justice system during a virtual forum Tuesday evening by the East Mount Airy Neighborhoods and West Mount Airy Neighborhoods.

Incumbent Larry Krasner touted his office’s diverse hiring practices. He said that he has hired law schools at the nation’s historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and law schools as the first time in enforcement to recruit for his office.

Republican revolt A. Charles Peruto Jr., who is unopposed in his party’s primary, said that many of the candidates, including Republican Attorney General Josh Shapiro, have a personal or financial interest in the state Supreme Court, state Superior Court, Philadelphia Commonwealth Court, and Philadelphia County Court.

The last day to register to vote is May 3 and the primary election is May 18.