



Standard-Speaker

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Open up Pa. lifting COVID-19 restrictions on Memorial Day

BY MICHAEL RUBINKAM
 ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pennsylvania will lift all COVID-19 restrictions except its masking order on Memorial Day, the Wolf administration announced Tuesday, promising to restore something approaching normalcy to the state more than a year into the pandemic and just in time for summer.

Capacity restrictions on bars, restaurants and other businesses, as well as indoor and outdoor event gathering limits, will go away on May 31, the Department of Health said.

Even the state's mask mandate could be lifted — if enough people get vaccinated, officials said.

Please see **OPEN**, Page A5



From left, Kaitlyn McAlarney, Connor McAlarney, Gavin McAlarney, Gianna Musolino and Alison McAlarney, all of Hazleton, are among a crowd at the Hometown Craft Show at the Hometown Farmers Market on Sunday. Starting Memorial Day, there will no longer be restrictions on the sizes of gatherings and crowds in Pennsylvania according to an announcement Tuesday by Gov. Tom Wolf.

JACQUELINE DORMER / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

PFIZER VACCINE

Approval sought to vaccinate youths ages 2-11

BY EMILY ANTHES
 THE NEW YORK TIMES

Pfizer expects to apply to the Food and Drug Administration in September for emergency authorization to administer its coronavirus vaccine to children between the ages of 2 and 11, the company told Wall Street analysts and reporters on Tuesday during its quarterly earnings call.

The company said it also plans to apply this month for full approval of the vaccine for use in people from ages 16 to 85. And it said it expected to have clinical trial data on the safety of its vaccine in pregnant women by early August.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is being given to adults under an emergency use authorization that the companies received in December. Obtaining full FDA approval would, among other things, allow the companies to market the vaccine directly to consumers. The approval process is expected to take months.

"Full approval is a welcome indicator of the continued safety and efficacy of the Pfizer vaccine," Saskia Popescu, an infectious disease epidemiologist at George Mason University, said in an email. It could also "build further confidence in the importance of vaccination," she said.

The Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine was the first to receive emergency authorization in the United States. Emergency authorizations are meant to be temporary, and can be revoked when a public health emergency is over.

Full approval would allow the vaccine to remain on the market as the pandemic fades. It may also make it easier for companies, government agencies, schools and other entities to require vaccination. The University of California and California State University school systems, for instance, have

Please see **YOUTHS**, Page A5



DANIEL BURKE / TEMPLE UNIVERSITY HEALTH SYSTEM

Thomas Puskar, center, is surrounded by the medical team and surgeons from Temple University Hospital on the day of his discharge following a lung transplant. Puskar was the first person in Pennsylvania to receive a "breathing lung" transplant, thanks to a TransMedics Organ Care System device at Temple that keeps donated organs "alive" for a longer period of time.

Breathe easier

Tresckow man first in Pa. to receive 'breathing lung' transplant

BY JILL WHALEN
 STAFF WRITER

Thomas Puskar is breathing much easier following a lung transplant — the first of its kind in Pennsylvania — he received at Temple University Hospital. "My oxygen level is really, real-

ly good and I am feeling much better," said Puskar, 62, of Tresckow.

Puskar was the first person in Pennsylvania to receive a "breathing lung."

Temple University Hospital's new device, called the TransMed-

ics Organ Care System, keeps organs functioning and "breathing" after removal from a donor. The portable equipment keeps organs in an environment that mimics the human body.

"Normally an organ is good for three or four hours," Puskar

explained. "The TransMedics system is like an incubator for an infant. It keeps warm blood and oxygen flowing into it to keep it alive. It's the coolest thing."

Please see **TRANSPLANT**, Page A3

Hazleton city council updates business license regulations

BY SAM GALSKI
 STAFF WRITER

Beginning next year, businesses and most rental property owners in Hazleton will be required to get a business license under new licensing regulations that were adopted by city council.

Council voted 3-2 recently to approve final reading of revised business licensing regulations that keep the licensing fee at \$100 but

would require owners of rental properties that are not owner-occupied to get a business license.

The revised ordinance has been in development for more than a year and was presented as the administration consolidates existing codes that pertain to restaurants, manufacturing, food trucks and other regulations into one ordinance, Mayor Jeff Cusat said.

Rental property registra-

tion and inspection regulations will remain in place. The business license ordinance differs from those regulations because it recognizes most rental properties as businesses, he said.

"This business license ordinance is (required) to have that rental business," Cusat said. "We want to classify a business as a business."

Please see **CITY**, Page A3



WARREN RUDA / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A view of apartments on Diamond Avenue is shown. Hazleton City Council recently voted to require owners of rental properties that are not owner-occupied to get a business license.

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INDEX

Business A9
 Classified B6
 Community A6
 Entertainment A7
 Sports B1

LOCAL

Return to the scene
 Thieves steal bicycles from a shed at the Greater Hazleton Rails to Trails for a second time. **A4**

DEATHS A2

David B. Calvello
 Michael A. Colombo
 Ruth Ann Frederick
 Daniel G. Guydish
 Bernard H. Lenhardt
 Raymond Letcher



Yeilenys Munoz
 Freeland

WEATHER

Mostly cloudy, showers
 High of 64
A9



Member,
 Greater Hazleton
 News Partnership

Wolf takes next step to start carbon emissions caps in 2022

BY MARC LEVY
ASSOCIATED PRESS

HARRISBURG — Gov. Tom Wolf's administration on Tuesday solidified its intention to begin imposing a price on greenhouse gas emissions from power plants next year as part of a multi-state consortium, over the protests of coal- and gas-region lawmakers and elements of the energy industry.

After fielding thousands of written public comments, Wolf's administration issued a final rule for the regulatory plan with the same timeline and same goals for reductions in carbon dioxide, considered a major driver of global warming.

The rule must still go through two state regulatory boards with veto power, although both are tilted toward Wolf appointees and allies.

Wolf, a Democrat, in 2019 ordered his administration to

start drafting regulations to bring Pennsylvania into what is now an 11-state consortium of Northeastern and mid-Atlantic states that sets a price and declining limits on carbon dioxide emissions from power plants.

If Wolf is successful, Pennsylvania would become the first major fossil fuel state to adopt a carbon pricing policy and join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, called RGGI. Wolf has made both a centerpiece of his strategy to fight climate change in one of the nation's biggest power states and polluters.

In consortium states, owners of power plants fueled by coal, oil or natural gas with a capacity of 25 megawatts or more must buy a credit for every ton of carbon dioxide they emit.

That gives them an incentive to lower their emissions while making non-emitting plants —

such as nuclear power plants, wind turbines and solar installations — more cost competitive in power markets.

The cost of credits would generate an estimated hundreds of millions of dollars annually for the state in Pennsylvania.

Opponents — primarily lawmakers and blue-collar labor unions from coal- and gas-producing regions of Pennsylvania and some fossil-fuel industries — say imposing a price, or a "tax," on carbon would devastate coal and natural gas jobs and businesses in their communities, including the home-grown economies that support those industries.

They also question the legality of the governor's authority to join the consortium — nicknamed RGGI — or impose the associated price on carbon without legislative approval, raising the possibility of a lawsuit.

CITY: Regulation in effect Jan. 1

FROM PAGE A1

Administrators will likely revisit rental registration and inspection regulations as they continue updating city code, Cusat said.

Council narrowly approved the updated business license regulations on final reading last week, with President Jim Perry and council members Tony Colombo and Lauren Sacco voting "yes." Council members Allison Barletta and Jack Mundie voted "no."

Cusat said that under the revised ordinance, LLCs or other entities that own rental properties are not classified as owner-occupied. Each of those entities must secure a business license. However, a single LLC that owns multiple rental properties would need just one business license.

A restaurant owner who has more than one location in the city must get a business license for each location, he said.

A property owner who rents to a business would need a business license to rent the property and the business would need a license to operate in the building, according to the mayor.

At council's request, the administration added an exemption for "legacy leases," or scenarios where a property has been transferred from one family member to another and allows the original owner to occupy the property without financial consideration.

Charitable organizations are exempt from the licensing fee but would have to file forms with the city. Exemptions would also apply to a person who rents part of a duplex or has another structure on the same deed as their primary residence, Cusat said in April.

The updated ordinance is effective this year but will not be implemented until Jan. 1.

Council approved the ordinance last week after hearing concerns from business owners and landlords at a work session.

The business license ordinance passed as administrators are looking at ways to eliminate the mercantile tax. Council has been reviewing the ordinance since at least February.

Contact the writer: sgalski@standard-speaker.com; 570-501-3586

TRANSPLANT: Area man makes history

FROM PAGE A1

According to information from Temple, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration expanded the use of the organ care system to include donor lungs that are sometimes deemed unacceptable because they are too far to transport by traditional means in a cooler.

The device gives the harvested organs more time, and thus allows more people to receive organ transplants.

"Temple is able to serve a high volume of lung transplant patients, but tens of thousands of people in the U.S. are currently in need of lifesaving organs," said Dr. Yoshida Toyoda, chief of cardiovascular surgery at Temple and Puskar's surgeon. "The hope is that advances in technology like the OCS Lung System will eventually afford more patients the opportunity to receive an organ transplant."

Puskar said he began to feel ill toward the end of 2019. He was admitted to the hospital for three days for what doctors believed was severe influenza.

"I went home and I was starting to feel all right. Not quite right but I was doing OK," he said.

He decided to spend a week off from work in order to recover as best he could.

And then it hit him again. Puskar said he went to an urgent care center.

"My oxygen was so low that they called the ambulance" and admitted him to a hospital, he said.

Tests revealed that he had pulmonary fibrosis in his left lung. The disease damages and scars lungs, making it difficult to breathe and leaving the sufferer more open to infections.

Doctors told him he would need a lung transplant.

His medical team referred him to Temple University Hospital in the beginning of March 2020.

He was on a high dose of steroids and other medications and needed eight liters of oxygen a day.

In September, Puskar received the call that would save his life: Temple had a lung waiting for him.

"I was in a daze at first," he said. "I called my daughter, we got together, and boom! I was gone. That was it. I was in the right place at the right time."

The operation lasted about six hours and Puskar recovered at the hospital for two weeks.

"My surgeon, Dr. Toyoda, is one of the top doctors," he said. "I was blessed. The entire hospital staff is wonderful."

Puskar is grateful, too, to his donor.

"I'm still trying to write a letter to her family," he said. "I still honestly don't know what to say."

Puskar said he feels so much better since the transplant. He no longer needs oxygen and he's able to enjoy his grandkids.

"They're able to hang out more with Pop-Pop, their buddy," he said.

Contact the writer: jwhalen@standardspeaker.com; 570-501-3592.

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