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Active COVID cases trend downward in county



The number of active COVID cases in Greene County is in decline, but the drop in attendance at vaccination pods worries county officials

By Ted Remsnyder
Columbia-Greene Media

CATSKILL — COVID-19 cases began to trend downward in Greene County this week, with 79 new cases identified by the Greene County Department of Health on Thursday, delivering some badly needed good news to county officials.

The county now has 1,018 active COVID cases, down from the 1,375 active COVID positive cases recorded in the county a week ago.

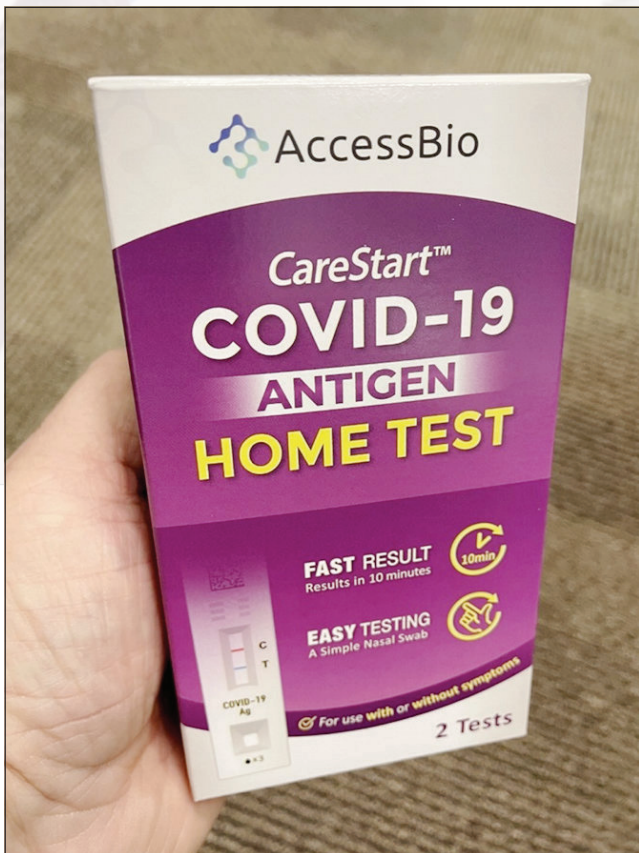
The county's number of positive

cases briefly fell to triple digits Wednesday, when the number dipped to 992 active cases as of Jan. 19.

The county first crossed 1,000 active cases on Jan. 5, when 1,135 active cases were identified.

"Certainly, the active cases are down but I would say we're at a plateau, but we might not be falling yet," Greene County Administrator Shaun Groden said. "We're also getting less people testing,

See COVID A2



A COVID home-testing kit. Greene County officials are weighing their effect on the downward trend in active case numbers.

FILE PHOTO

9 years in prison for child sex abuser

By Bill Williams
Columbia-Greene Media

CATSKILL — A Greene County man will spend most of the next decade in prison for sexually abusing a child, Greene County District Attorney Joseph Stanzione said Thursday.

Thomas Higgins, 44, of Catskill, was sentenced Jan. 14 in Greene County Court by Judge Terry J. Wilhelm to nine years in prison plus 20 years of post-release supervision. He will also be required to register as a sex offender, Stanzione said.

Higgins pleaded guilty last Nov. 12 to a charge of course of sexual conduct against a child, a class B felony.

The crimes involved a child under 13 and occurred in various locations in the towns of Catskill and Cairo, Stanzione said.

Following a lengthy investigation, Higgins was arrested Aug. 10 by the Greene County Sheriff's Office and was charged with course of sexual conduct against a child.

The incidents occurred over a period of one year, beginning in December 2013 and continuing until December 2014, Stanzione said.

According to New York Penal Law, a person is guilty of first-degree course of sexual conduct against a child when, over a period of time not less than three months in duration, he or she engages in two or more acts of sexual conduct with a child under 13, with the defendant at least 18 years old.

Under the law, it is also an element of this offense that the sexual conduct was committed without the consent of the child.

It is not a defense to this charge that the defendant did not know that the person with whom he or she engaged in sexual conduct was under 13 years of age.

If convicted of first-degree course of conduct against a child in the first degree, the sentence is up to 25 years in prison.

The charge is also classified as a violent felony offense.

The defendant must serve at least six-sevenths of the prison sentence before he or she will be eligible to be released on parole, according to state Penal Law.

Firearms amendment weighed by Greene lawmakers

By Ted Remsnyder
Columbia-Greene Media

CATSKILL — The Greene County Legislature is weighing an amendment to its administrative manual that would allow county legislators to carry firearms onto county property.

During the legislature's first regular meeting of the year on Wednesday night, the board unanimously approved a resolution that amended the manual to specify that only members of the New York State Police, the Greene County Sheriff's Office or any town

or village police department in the county be permitted to carry firearms onto county property.

At Tuesday's Government Operations Committee meeting, Legislator Michael Bulich, R-Catskill, suggested the legislature craft an amendment to the resolution that would allow current legislators who are licensed to carry firearms to do so in county buildings.

The legislature is currently crafting such an amendment for introduction at a future committee meeting.

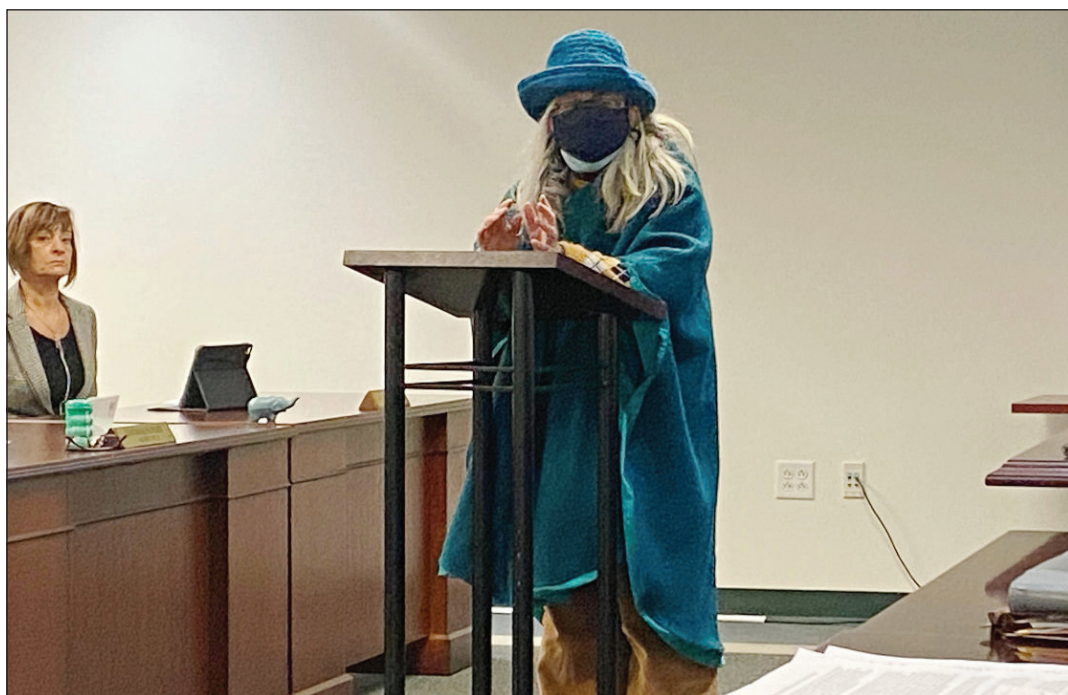
"That is the plan,"

Legislature Vice Chairman Matthew Luvera, R-Catskill, said after Wednesday's meeting. "We hope to bring forth another amendment based on the recommendation of the county attorney after getting his input. Then hopefully at next month's committee meetings we'll bring that up again."

The legislature's next Government Operations Committee meeting is scheduled for Feb. 14 at 6 p.m.

During Wednesday's meeting, the Legislature

See FIREARMS A2



TED REMSNYDER/COLUMBIA-GREENE MEDIA

Cairo resident Mary Finneran speaks to the Greene County Legislature on Wednesday evening regarding the county's planned Exit 21 medical complex in Catskill.

■ WEATHER page A2

TODAY	TONIGHT	SAT
COLD	COLD	COLD
Mostly sunny and frigid	Partly cloudy and frigid	Mostly sunny; bitterly cold
HIGH	LOW	19
15	-3	9

■ SPORTS



Play-by-play announcers out

COVID-19 protocols will keep play-by-play teams from reporting.

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■ LOCAL



Keller tribute

Meeting dedicated to fallen lawmaker

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