

Minutes of the Nebraska City Board of Health
March 16, 2020
Rowe Memorial Public Safety Complex

The Nebraska City Board of Health met in regular session inside the Rowe Memorial Public Safety Complex, 1518 Central Avenue, Nebraska City, NE at 5:00 PM on Monday, March 16, 2020. Notice of the meeting was given in advance by posting in at least three public places, the designated method for giving notice, as shown by the Certificate of Posting Notice attached to these minutes. Availability of the agenda was communicated in advance to the media, the Mayor and Board of Health members of this proceeding and said meeting was open to the public.

Mayor Bryan Bequette called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM. The Mayor publicly stated to all in attendance that a current copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was available for review and indicated the location of such copy posted in the room where the meeting was being held. Upon roll call the following answer present: Gregg Goebel, David Lacy, and Mayor Bequette. Dr. Brad Vasa arrived at 5:09 p.m. The following City Officials were present: City Administrator Grayson Path, City Attorney Drew Graham, Utilities Director Jeff Kohrs, Construction and Facility Manager Marty Stovall, City Clerk-Treasurer Randy Dunster, Recreation Director Scooter Edmisten, Library Director Donna Kruse, Fire Chief Robert Schreiner, Paramedic Manager Andrew Snodgrass and Deputy Clerk-Treasurer Patricia Moore.

Mayor Bequette discussed the Duties of the Board of Health as described in the Nebraska City Municipal Code Book, Chapter 18, Article II as well as set out the current members of the board including himself as chairperson, Dr. Brad Vasa (Medical Advisor), Chief of Police David Lacy (Secretary and Quarantine Officer), and Gregg Goebel, Emergency Management for Otoe County. The Mayor noted there is also a vacant seat at this time. He further noted the vacant seat position will be put before City Council tonight for the appointment of Wendy Snodgrass.

Mayor Bequette gives a brief synopsis on wanting to convene the Board last week but realized it's an Open Meetings Act board. He didn't want to call an emergency session due to not wanting to panic the public unnecessarily. However, he did want to start meeting with the City Administrator, the Fire Chief, the Assistant Chief for Rescue, and Dr. Vasa. All met on Monday to go over protocols especially for fire and rescue; they have also been in contact with Emergency Management and implementing extra training. CHI also convened a meeting Thursday to share information with local businesses, local providers of assisted living, the City, and the Schools. He noted Nebraska City schools closed down starting March 17 through the 1st of April. He then went over how he'd like to address items starting with the current situation as to where we believe the current situation is. He noted when we met throughout the week the biggest thing was making sure that when we spoke about information we knew where people were getting their information from; we want to deal with authoritative sources and we want to make sure we don't get into circular reporting. Then he noted they talked about certain tasks or operations or things we need to take specific guidance towards; administration/logistics that need to be taken care of; lastly communications the Board of Health might be thinking about.

The Mayor introduces Grant Brueggemann, MPH Director. Brueggemann noted the last he knew there were 18-20 cases in the State of Nebraska. His department covers Otoe, Nemaha, Richardson, Pawnee, and Johnson counties; no cases have been reported at this time. With more labs coming on board there will be a broader net in the future. He supports the decision for schools to shut down. He noted the Governor had a press conference today, he understands public events will now be limited to 10 people or less. As things progress this could change too.

Addressing the 10 people or less recommendation, Mayor Bequette noted due to the Open Meeting Act, we cannot discourage people to not attend any of the City's meetings. The City will be looking at ways to keep people informed. The City moved out of the small City Chamber to where we can at least abide by the social distancing recommendation.

Questions were asked by patron who owns a local daycare in Nebraska City regarding guidance on staying open. Brueggemann recommends she review the CDC website for guidelines as well as the State Licensing for Daycares plus go back and review their own policy as well. Conversations are had with the State Government on how to alleviate the burdens presented. Information all are receiving is fluid at this point.

Andrew Snodgrass advises to review the CDC website on guidelines.

Scooter Edmisten discusses the Easter Egg hunt that is scheduled for April 11; at 250 level would be okay to have but at the 10 level need to be prudent, creative, and compassionate per Mayor Bequette. Unsure if it's possible to do smaller Easter Egg hunts... Grayson reiterates the 10 level is for parades, funerals, and gatherings but not so much the work place, correct? Others discuss CDC advising that employers make their own call at this point. Brueggemann believes it doesn't affect the businesses; it's not relevant to grocery stores and such. However, he believes the Governor does have trigger points depending on community spread. Bars and restaurants are not closed at this point (10 people rule). A single case is not considered community transmission.

Marty Stovall addresses the members with a question on RFQ submissions. He's been asked if those should be submitted electronically versus hard copies due to transmission on paper. Brueggemann, Snodgrass don't believe paper is an issue, more concerned with hard plastics, shopping carts, etc.

Mayor asks Dr. Vasa on updates at the hospital. Dr. Vasa advises protocols change daily; he noted to his knowledge we do not have a positive test in the community. He also noted there is a bureaucracy and power structure for a reason... CDC to the DHHS, and then they give guidance to the municipalities and the hospitals; rescue squads follow. He believes we are plugged into the right information sources. The important thing is to listen to those who know what they are doing and follow their advice; they are experts for a reason.

Gregg Goebel gives an update and noted they work directly with the CDC and Homeland Security. Most of their guidance comes directly from the health department through Grant. He's also been working with the hospitals, EMS, the Fire Chief, the Cities, a bunch of the Villages within the community throughout the County by trying to get the most updated information out to them. Daily he gets updates and passes down the information that is pertinent. He noted the County Board of Commissioners met an hour ago to discuss the process on what the County is going to do and how the Courthouse is going to operate. Similar processes are in place on limiting access to the Courthouse, the rooms they can go in, how daily functions will be handled and their employees.

Grayson Path gives an update for the City... He discusses the Library and controlling access with the schools shutting down. Need to control access in that it would be counter intuitive with kids congregating, etc. Internally the question is do we shut the library down, control access. He discusses how things were done when the Library was shut down during their renovation (i.e. calling ahead for books). With the 10 number (not counting employees), they have now closed the geriatric programming as well as the other programming for the youth. The building is high traffic, lots of kids, plus a lot of Senior Citizens. Options to treat like restaurants (i.e. takeout by calling ahead, go online, remote services, email). Would the guidance be to shut the door? Employees even if doors were shut always have things they can do. Others around the State have closed.

Donna Kruse addresses concerns for the Library as well. She noted it's a combination of the hybrid for plans across the State. They are currently wiping down the book covers as they come back in. Also, have concerns of not having enough supplies to continue the necessary cleaning. She reiterates what Grayson noted on limiting service. Data bases are still available for students who will potentially be back in class in a certain way. Just need direction at what point in time do we change the way things are currently handled and what capacity to allow in the building.

Rob Schreiner noted as far as Fire services go we are still open for business. We will take life, safety, and property into consideration. Business as usual, we will take precautions with contact with Gregg, Grant, Andrew. Monitoring and improvising as we go along.

Andrew Snodgrass gives an EMS update, noting he is looking at other communities and other States on how they are handling issues. For Seniors... advising not to go out, stay home. The concern is delivery of medications, food and being proactive versus reactive. They are our highest risk population. He asks the question, how can a government entity, public entity, and private entity all work together to help fellow neighbors in time of need. He then gives an example of another community. As far as EMS side, they share same issues as Donna. Cleaning supplies are limited... working with Grant and Gregg closely but noted there isn't a fix anytime soon. Current suppliers are saying 12-18 months so trying to be proactive and work together. Alternatively they are using bleach.

David Lacy gives the Police Department update and noted for selfish reasons they are going to try and take care of their own while still continuing to provide services. He also noted they would ask if the public has a law enforcement issue, evaluate what it is, if something minor, then call and they can take report over phone. For emergencies that needs law enforcement's physical presence they will continue to show up.

Jeff Kohrs gives the Utility update. They will continue to provide services to citizens however are considering limited access to the building since the public has alternative methods on making their payment. They will have people there to answer questions but looking at possible shift work. Some people working in the office, others working from home but keep same groups together.

Commissioner Wehling gives an update on the parks department. Baseball, softball, and soccer at the local level will follow the Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA) model. No practices until April 2. He will continue to monitor their guidelines. Games and practices will be postponed for now.

Father Jonathan Haschke gives an update on Lourdes Central Catholic school. He noted they have been working with the other local schools and the call was made they will shut down beginning March 17 with a tentative plan to open up on April 1. The 1st week will be Spring break; the 2nd week they will have online learning. Commissioner Wehling addresses concern if Library closes and internet access.

Amy Allgood gives an update from NCTC. She discusses Arbor Day and the fluidity of the event taking place after hearing the Governor speak. She asks the timeframe on the number 10? Grayson addresses and states it is suggested 8 weeks out; event 6 weeks out. She needs the Board's recommendation on what to present to their board.

The Store Manager of Walmart gave an update for their hours of operation and moving forward. He noted the Nebraska City store will be open 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. He discusses their store is not a 24 hour store but their hours give them time to stock, clean, etc. He noted they are currently experiencing supply issues from their suppliers some of that has to do with attendance issues. Walmart has implemented their own attendance policy with respect to COVID-19. He noted they are encouraging associates to stay home if they feel ill. Public Health is in front of their mind. Mayor Bequette noted he spoke to the Assistant Manager at Fareway and basically the same thing... buy what you need, don't overdo it and leave for others as well as he discussed more customers coming into Nebraska City from outside of our area. Clay noted online options can only be ordered 2 days in advance versus 7 days. The order window is 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. They are limiting their supplies (i.e. toilet paper) to customers based on what's coming off the trucks; he is noticing more customers coming from Omaha due to the stores there being sold out. He has a concern due to the outbreak in Douglas County.

Mayor Bequette brings up the point on employees being a premium not only for health concerns but for the care of children issues, etc. He noted it's all integrated but we'll keep talking and work it out.

Mayor Bequette asks are there any tasks that need to be addressed or logistical issues. Drew Graham addresses the quarantine ordinance question that Mayor Bequette previously asked of him. He believes the Board of Health has the power to implement whatever regulations the Board deems necessary. He was able to find a few ordinances outside of Nebraska, more general quarantine language that other cities have implemented prior to this concern. General quarantine/isolation Ordinance. If the Board would like, the City Council can pursue something to that end which would help the Board out in their regulations, they can always point to a City Code to say pursuant to this we are going to implement certain quarantines or isolations. Mayor Bequette asks the question, so the Board of Health can issue an enforceable regulation? Drew replies, yes they can through the Cities power to regulate health and safety through the Board of Health... you are the entity that acts on behalf of the City. Other discussion is had.

David Lacy noted they did receive notice from the Courts today, if someone gets a citation for violating a traffic law, etc. the Court date will be about 2 months out.

Gregg Goebel noted the Ordinance issue addressed by the City Attorney; a similar conversation was had and similar information was put out with the County Attorney.

The Mayor thanks the press for showing up and putting out communication.

Donna Kruse goes back to the concern on whether this Board would be making the decision on whether or not to stay open, limited access. What is the determining factor to go to that next level of limiting access? Mayor Bequette advises he believes that can be determined through your department, Commissioner, and City Administrator. He doesn't believe the Board would make that decision.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:49 PM.



Patricia Moore, Deputy City Clerk-Treasurer