

Minutes of the Nebraska City Board of Health
October 19, 2020
Rowe Memorial Public Safety Complex

The Nebraska City Board of Health (BOH) met in regular session inside the Rowe Memorial Public Safety Complex, 1518 Central Avenue, Nebraska City, NE at 5:00 PM on Monday, October 19, 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 BOH members of this proceeding and said meeting was open to the public.

Mayor Bryan Bequette called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM. The Mayor publicly stated to all in attendance that he is required by law to inform the public that a copy the Open Meeting act is posted on the wall to your right as you come in the door of the Rowe Building Gary White Memorial room. This meeting is being recorded. If you are present and wish to speak please come to the podium and state your name, address, and speak directly towards the microphone the entire time you are addressing the Board. If you are listening in via the zoom platform please keep your microphone muted; if you wish to make a comment, please click on the "Raise Hand" button, for those joining us through the call-in feature, please press *9 (star nine). This will notify our moderator, Randy Dunster, there is a comment from one of our virtual attendees. When you speak please state your name and address.

Upon roll call the following answered present: Wendy Snodgrass, David Lacy, Greg Goebel, Dr. Brad Vasa and Mayor Bryan Bequette. The following City Officials were present as well via zoom and in person: Interim City Administrator Marty Stovall, City Attorney Drew Graham, Utilities General Manager Jeff Kohrs, Recreation Director Scooter Edmisten, Library Director Donna Kruse, Fire Chief Rob Schreiner, Finance Commissioner Gloria Glover, Street Commissioner Vic Johns, Parks Commissioner Patrick Wehling, and Utilities Commissioner Paul Davis, City Clerk-Treasurer Randy Dunster as well as Deputy Clerk-Treasurer Patricia Moore.

Mayor Bequette noted there are 2 items on the agenda this afternoon. The 1st item of business is the approval of the BOH October 5, 2020 meeting minutes. Greg Goebel moved to approve the meeting minutes of October 5, 2020 as provided. Dr. Brad Vasa seconded the motion. With no further discussion, upon roll call the following voted YES. David Lacy, Wendy Snodgrass, Dr. Brad Vasa, Greg Goebel and Mayor Bryan Bequette. Voting NO: None. Motion carried.

Mayor Bequette noted the 2nd item on the agenda is discussion/action regarding a status update on the CoVid-19 situation; potential tasks, logistical needs and communication. Mayor Bryan Bequette asked Gregg Goebel of Emergency Management for an update. Gregg provided the update noting as of 3:30 p.m. this afternoon, the State of Nebraska had 543, 530 tests; 58,016 are positive with a death rate of 584. Otoe County has a total of 255 tested cases out of that 122 are active. We have shown a 76 case increase over the last 2 weeks. MO has 158,101 positive cases, 2,590 deaths; IA had 107,729 positive cases with 1,537 deaths; KS had 72,968 positive cases with 872 deaths. All the Counties that we monitor with the 3 adjoining States have shown increases ranging from 30-35 all the way up to 200 in the last 2 weeks. He advised in the SE region numbers are definitely going up. Mayor Bequette noted our 14 day rate is around 70, correct? Goebel advised yes.

Turning to the medical side Mayor Bequette asked Dr. Vasa to provide an update. Dr. Vasa noted the numbers don't lie, we are in the middle of a pandemic and this is the most cases we've had. He

reiterated the point we need to be very careful. He further noted he's not a fan of mandating or having Chief Lacy to enforce a mask mandate but as a City and County we need to wear masks as an entity. He emphasizes to wear a mask and social distance. Mayor Bequette added he is not aware of any employee mandates for any of the departments. Discussion is had on procedures at City Hall. Graham advised there is no requirement. Randy Dunster advised we do have a glass window barrier. There are no active cases at the City; however, there is one person at Utilities who is quarantined as a precaution. Mayor Bequette advised we can talk about City concerns under tasks.

Mayor Bequette prompted Dr. DeFreece on a hospital update. DeFreece stated he would like to reiterate what Dr. Vasa noted on masks/social distancing. CHI health is seeing increases in hospitalizations; higher than in April when this 1st started. However, they are not seeing the same amount of increase in ICU's and ventilators. He added that could change as it spreads. With the increase in cases, it is pushing the limit on the hospital system. As far as St. Mary's is concerned it isn't affecting them as much as far as the health measure. They are seeing some active illnesses in their clinic and ER. He added it is important to know that the symptoms are variable noting to say you have to have a fever, cough, etc. we are finding out that's not correct. It can be a multitude or a variety of symptoms. He further added we don't know who has what symptoms or who is ill so the mask wearing/social distancing is extremely important. Through contact tracing they are seeing a significant amount of disease spread during meal times. We take the masks off and people eat; so distancing is important here. They continue to do TestNebraska on Wednesdays from 10-12 p.m. They were at 70 plus last Wednesday; they have put up a tent for the winter on the East side of hospital. This will allow them to do some immunization clinics for the flu and eventually COVID. Inside the hospital they continue to do their testing through the clinic with good turn-around times. We hope to have the ability to test soon when we get the reagent to be able to do tests to delineate between influenza and COVID as well as other viruses like RSV. It's hard to differentiate the disease based off of symptomology. It could be a rough 6-8 weeks with the flu being the wild card. Mayor Bequette asked, given the numbers, is there anything attributable to why we are not seeing the increase in the ICU/use of ventilators. Is it because we know how to treat early or people are more aware of their symptoms so they are coming in earlier. Dr. Vasa noted it might be the covert of people who are actually getting the disease; with us protecting the nursing homes, etc. What's open, the schools, you are seeing the younger healthier population contract it. He added he is speculating but they aren't getting as sick. Dr. DeFreece agrees with Dr. Vasa's analysis. He further added he believes Nebraska and the Health Department have done a good job protecting the nursing homes. He also added for the ICU/ventilators there has been some change in the treatment (i.e. coning, physician changes, use of steroids, etc.). The initial treatment was to put people on a ventilator right away, now that's the last resort. He added it's probably just a combination of all of the above but doesn't know what percentage leads to what.

Mayor Bequette asked Wendy Snodgrass if she has an update from the State. Wendy noted she has a few updates. The State is working with the Global Health Department and other partners on the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccine. No arrival date has been set but they are putting plans together for the roll out of that. As a reminder, Flu Vaccines are more important than ever and DHHS recommends that all get their flu shot before the end of October. The CDC has recommendations for gatherings with the Holidays coming up (Halloween, Thanksgiving, etc.). They have tips on costume masks versus protective masks.

Mayor Bequette asked Chief Lacy if he has anything new to report. David Lacy reiterated again they are answering calls, officers feel comfortable in asking individuals if they have symptoms. They are returning calls on their phones when they can instead of taking the call. Chief Lacy noted he has a

question for Dr. Vasa. We here about the oral swabs in the mouth. There is some concern if they are accurate or not. He added supposedly 85% of the population will be affected with this disease and will be asymptomatic. We have people going in and taking tests and they are asymptomatic and they go out and do what they do for the next 3 days until they find out they tested positive. Dr. Vasa goes over the use of the PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction), those tests tend to be more accurate but are usually a little more expensive. This test will usually pick up a lot of asymptomatic people. He advised on the antigen test; he believes saliva is used for it and it is more of the instant reads but they are usually not accurate for asymptomatic people it would be more for someone who had fever, chills, and symptoms. They are more likely to be positive in that setting. Rapid tests are discussed (PCR versus Antigen).

Mayor Bequette asked Marty Stovall for an update from the City. Marty advised all departments are operating as they have been so no changes at this time. He advised that Scooter is here tonight for an annual event that he would like to run past the BOH to get an opinion on whether to have or not.

Scooter Edmisten addressed the Board. He noted they have traditionally done what is called the Great Pumpkin Egg hunt. It's an Easter Egg hunt that you do in the dark; the kid's use flashlights to hunt for the eggs. It's presented like an Easter Egg hunt where the kids are spread out into divisions according to age. The event generally draws about 100-150 kids depending on whether conditions, etc. The event, if approved, will take place at Steinhart Park off Central Avenue at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, October 30. The eggs are laid out in the grass; they start each group separately and allow them to get used to how things are done and to be able to get 2-3 eggs; this is layered by age. Then, when they've gone through all ages they will shoot the gun and let all get as many eggs as they can. Social distancing and turnout is discussed at length. Edmisten advised they can spread out from the skate park to 22nd Street. Mandating masks is discussed as well as highly recommending masks. Current sports events are discussed on how protocols have been put in place. Mayor Bequette noted if you can keep them separated and it's outside he feels it is important to still do events that you can do safely. It's something for people to look forward to and do; however because there are not that many events sometimes you receive more than expected. Dr. Vasa asked question on what are the phase 3 guidelines on outdoor events. Graham advised under the updated DHM, outdoor gathering are still at 100%. 500 and above you have to submit a plan. Edmisten advised they had an Easter Egg drive through event in the Spring and gave away 330+ bags. He further added we don't normally get that size of a crowd for this event. Trail of treats event is discussed as well; sponsored by the NewsPress and businesses doing it on their own. Edmisten advised this event will be pretty controlled; he and his wife are the egg hidiers for the event. They will wear gloves, etc. when filling the eggs and hiding the eggs. Social distancing and masks are further discussed in order for the event to take place.

Mayor Bequette asked Jeff Kohrs to provide an update for Utilities. He noted procedures continue as normal; he added as mentioned earlier they do have one employee who is quarantined as a precautionary measure at this time.

Mayor Bequette prompted Rob Schreiner for an update with the Fire Department. Rob advised they are purchasing a rapid test tester. It will be another tool they can use going forward. Mayor Bequette asked Chief Schreiner if he has a status on PPE. He advised as far as he knows they are doing pretty good. He believes they have found another vendor for masks.

Mayor Bequette moved the meeting to tasks advising the new DHM goes into effect Wednesday. Graham advised the Governor announced the State will be moving back to what has been designated

as Phase 3.1. As he understands, it is a little bit different than the original Phase 3 document. There are 4 areas of changes; it takes effect Wednesday, October 21 at 12:00 p.m. through November 30, 2020 unless extended or otherwise removed. The 4 areas have to do with the following and details can be found through this link <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Documents/COVID-19-Outline-of-Changes-to-Upcoming-DHMs-10-2020.pdf>:

- Elective Procedures/Surgeries
- Bars & Restaurants
- Gatherings
- Wedding & Funeral Reception Venues

Mayor Bequette noted now we can talk City. He asked Jeff on whether the public is coming in yet or not. Jeff advised no one is coming in. Donna Kruse of the Library gave an update and advised their staff have been wearing masks for a while now. If people want to browse the new materials they need to wear a mask and use hand sanitizer on their way in. Otherwise they can serve them by phone or internet. That way they can zip in/out to pick up their bag of materials in the lobby. In other areas, Mayor Bequette advised City Hall has a large glass barrier, he is unsure if that does as much as masks. The other point of sale would be the golf course. Edmisten advised they don't have any kind of barrier but they are in the process of adding one at the pool for next year. Per prompt Edmisten advised the golf course will be shutting down mid-November or as the weather dictates. Dr. Vasa stated so the employees don't wear masks when they are interacting with the public at the golf course. Edmisten advised it is a personal choice. If they want to, they can. Dr. Vasa asked about liability to the City. Graham advised it's complicated. Moore advised she believes we can social distance at City Hall with the barrier and we have a table in front of the counter which gives the proper distance as well. Dunster reiterated same. Edmisten jumped in and added they have a table as well which gives them the distance needed. More discussion is had on 6' social distancing, masks, etc.

Chief Lacy advised he received an email from a concerned citizen on masks being discarded around town improperly. He advised the patron he would bring it up to the BOH and ask citizens to dispose of their masks properly.

Mayor Bequette asked Dr. Vasa before he leaves the mask concern is he ok with all City departments maintaining 6' social distancing or wearing a mask. Dr. Vasa noted that's a reasonable expectation. Graham advised the City doesn't have a policy to mandate their employees to wear a mask. He added this is what we got into before where he suggested implementing a policy, it would have to be a recommendation. The City could recommend the employees wear it but absent a policy or some formal implementation he believes the City doesn't have the right to or the standing to say that. Extensive discussion is had on employer expectations and the challenges that could ensue without a policy in place for employees to wear a mask. Mayor Bequette brings up point that wearing a mask is still guidance in the DHM; there is no mandate that a mask has to be worn. The same discussion continued. Mayor Bequette advised he would bring up the policy concern at City Council tonight on what a policy might look like or might be or if we believe across departments that recommendations and the continual input of department heads on maintaining social distancing or wearing a mask is sufficient. Moore advised at City Hall she believes we have a pretty good system in place right now. Dunster per prompt of Dr. Vasa advised he doesn't believe it's a problem as far as people's behavior is concerned. Dr. Vasa brings up liability concerns again. Mayor Bequette noted the burden of proof for contact or contracting it from an individual at this location at this time it's going to be pretty tough to prove.

For logistics there is nothing of concern to address. For Communications Gregg advised Unified Command is scheduled for next week but that may change. The next Board of Health meeting will be two weeks from tonight, Monday, November 2, at 5:00 p.m. Mayor Bequette ended the meeting reiterating the policy concern would be addressed at City Council.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:47 PM.



Patricia Moore, Deputy City Clerk-Treasurer