

LAKELAND CITY COMMISSION

Special Called Meeting January 11, 2021

The Lakeland City Commission met in a special called session via GoTo Meeting. The meeting was available for public viewing online and on the local cable channels. Mayor Bill Mutz and Commissioners Sara McCarley, Chad McLeod, Stephanie Madden, Don Selvage, Bill Read, and Phillip Walker were present. Assistant City Manager Emily Colon, City Attorney Palmer Davis, Finance Director Mike Brossart, and City Clerk Kelly Koos were present.

Mayor Bill Mutz called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

Mayor Bill Mutz read a statement for the record.

Dr. Steve Achinger of Watson Clinic gave a presentation.

Polk County was seeing an increasing number of cases of COVID-19. He encouraged everyone to take serious our responsibility to protect each other. We must protect the vulnerable. Demand for urgent care services has increased the last couple of months. They were experiencing high wait times. They were having difficulty finding healthcare staff. The entire Country seemed to be experiencing the same problem. They were having difficulty filling key positions and anticipated being unable to provide services due to the lack of staff. Patients with other illnesses continued to need care.

The fundamentals of COVID-19 control are masks, social distancing, and hygiene. We all have to do all three of these during these critical times. We need to set the example for others so they will see the seriousness of the situation. The public needed to understand that it was in house gatherings that was a problem. It was critically important that the community accept the vaccine. It was far safer than catching COVID-19. Just get the vaccine when its offered. That is the pathway forward.

Dr. Joy Jackson of the Polk County Health Department presented.

There has been an upward trajectory for the last 8 weeks. She was very concerned. Two key community indicators are worsening. The positivity rate reflected positive tests for the first time, not repeated positive tests. Polk County now has over 800 deaths. We have three times as many patients in the hospital in ICU and on ventilators than 3 weeks ago. Sixty percent of patients with COVID are asymptomatic.

The Commission and Dr. Jackson discussed:

- The County Commission implementing a countywide mask mandate.
- Masks are a part of the solution. Ultimately we have to use all efforts of masking, avoiding crowds, handwashing and the vaccine.

- 17,000 vaccines have arrived in Polk. First priorities were healthcare workers and residents 65 and over. Long-term nursing facilities are being conducted through a federal program using Walgreens/CVS. The 17,000 vaccines have gone to hospitals and they are now vaccinating other healthcare workers.
- FQHC has received vaccines to vaccinate their staff and then 65 plus.
- The County health departments has received vaccines to vaccinate healthcare workers and 65 and older. If you are 65 or older please call and get your name on the waiting list.
- Community partners are stepping up to show support for mass vaccinations. Polk County had a coordinated infrastructure to administer vaccines as they become available.
- Larger counties with larger infrastructures may receive more vaccines. Citizens are not required to obtain their vaccination in their home county.
- More vaccines will be released and people should continue to call and place their names on the list.
- Younger folks who are not as vulnerable to COVID-19 can still make vulnerable family members sick. They should get the vaccine too.
- This virus is completely different from the flu. This was a multi systemic disease.
- The City and large churches in the community were willing to serve as locations for mass vaccinations.
- Positivity rates

Danielle Drummond of Lakeland Regional Health gave a report.

They were most concerned about the increases in the number of cases at the hospital. LRH had well over 500 new cases per day in the county. They were anticipating these new cases may further increase the COVID census in the hospital. LRH was already opening overflow COVID rooms. COVID cases stay significantly longer. LRH had forty-one patients on ventilators. Patients have not required ICU as often but they are very sick and staying much longer than a typical patient. LRH is leading the State in infusion treatments. They have given it to 450 patients so far and very few of them have needed to be hospitalized. We are encouraged by that.

Many of businesses are doing a great job. We must continue those best practices. Encourage virtual meetings, do not gather in person, and wear a mask. Approach everyone who you do not live with as someone who could potentially have the virus. LRH received just over 5,000 doses. They were charged to provide them to healthcare workers. We plan to be finished with those doses this week. We have requested additional allotments. We are planning for large scale vaccinations. We will notice the public when those are available. We are on the phone several times a week with the State. Hopefully they will feel confident sending additional vaccines to Polk County. We would anticipate the 2nd doses to arrive in 2 weeks.

The Commission discussed:

- Infusion treatments – antibody treatment that helps a body fight COVID-19. It must be administered within the first few days.

- Eating out - individuals dining together is an opportunity for spread.
- The Health Department had plans to vaccinate the 65+ at Talbot House.
- LRH was in good shape with regards to bed capacity. They might could use additional locations for vaccine administration. They have good plans to maximize what they will need to do in-house.
- **Call 863-298-7500 to register for a vaccine.** In the last 7 days there have been 24,000 COVID test administered in Polk County. The website is still being updated for a COVID vaccine test.
- In the summer LRH had beds but not the staff to care for patients. Providers came down to assist. That would be difficult to find right now.
- Everyone should avoid large groups as much as possible. No one should gather without protocols of socially distancing and wearing a mask the entire time.
- The virus is spread through respiratory droplets.

Mayor Bill Mutz asked for discussion from the Commission on how to move forward. He suggested a very strong citywide message that we should comply with masks and social distancing.

Commissioner Don Selvage reminded his colleagues that this is not a City of Lakeland problem. It is the Lakeland Regional Health system. He recommended the Commission strongly encourage the County to join us in what we decide to do. This morning he heard imminent staff shortages, overwhelming, critical moment, potentially dangerous, unable to provide services etc. Cheerleading is not enough. This is a crisis if you believe the experts. He proposed they immediately impose a mask mandate for the next 100 days and encourage the County to join the City.

Commissioner Chad McLeod this is a problem that is bigger than the City. We cannot take action until we convene in person. Other counties with mandates are surging too. He would not support a mandate. This is a time for a renewed compliance push. He would not support the mandate.

Commissioner Phillip Walker: it was predicted that there would be an uptick during the winter months. Social gathering and the lack of social distancing has been a problem. He did not think they could tell another body how to set policy. We can suggest but we cannot require them to impose a mandate. He was willing to do a push for community compliance and get the message out about how to curb the virus.

Mayor Bill Mutz: if we craft this wisely, other cities and the County may decide to join us.

Commissioner Sara McCarley agreed with a resolution emphasizing compliance rather than a mandate. We should all meet virtually whenever we can rather than meeting in person. We must go back to encouraging everyone to follow the guidelines and also set the example.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden: we have non-profits who cannot afford to forgo their annual fundraiser a second year in a row. You have brides who are trying to plan their

wedding. Does a 100-day mask mandate suffice for indoor events? What can nonprofits and large events expect moving forward. How can we work together with the County instead of working against each other? If we took the time to offer up what we would like to see, we could have a resolution to consider this Friday. We could then pass that resolution as early as Monday morning.

The Commission unanimously supported a resolution for consideration on Monday.

Commissioner Don Selvage did not intend to say we should limit businesses and organization or gatherings. We should move forward while following guidelines. He supported whatever we can do to increase awareness.

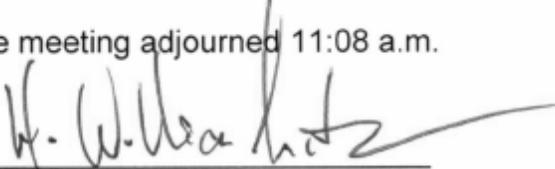
Commissioner Chad McLeod: We mentioned using city facilities for mass vaccinations. Is there anything we should be doing to prepare when the time comes?

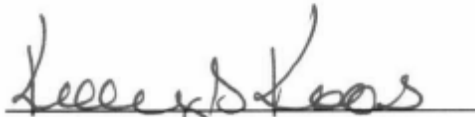
Emily Colon: The City was having conversations with LRH and Watson Clinic about facility needs.

Dr. Achinger: the CDC recommends those patients go ahead and receive the vaccine even if they have had the virus.

Danielle Drummond: The governor's order allows vaccination for vulnerable even if they are not 65 or older. LRH was taking a proactive approach.

The meeting adjourned 11:08 a.m.


H. William Mutz, Mayor


Kelly S. Koos, City Clerk

