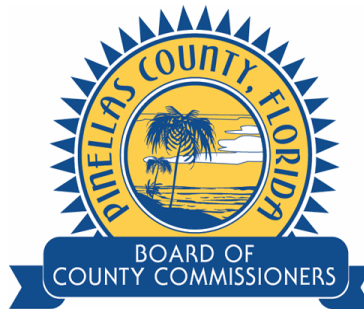


Pinellas County



Minutes - Final

Thursday, June 11, 2020

1:00 P.M.

Virtual Work Session

Board of County Commissioners - Work Session

Pat Gerard, Chair
Dave Eggers, Vice-Chair
Charlie Justice
Janet C. Long
Kathleen Peters
Karen Williams Seel
Kenneth T. Welch

ROLL CALL - 1:00 P.M.

Present: Pat Gerard, Chair; Dave Eggers, Vice-Chair; Charlie Justice; Janet C. Long; Kathleen Peters; Karen Williams Seel; and Kenneth T. Welch

Others Present: Barry A. Burton, County Administrator; Don Crowell, Chief Assistant County Attorney; and Jenny Masinovsky, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

Office of Technology and Innovation Director Bryan Zumwalt introduced himself and announced that he would be the Technology Moderator for the virtual work session; and that Chief Assistant County Attorney Don Crowell would serve as Process Moderator; whereupon, he conducted a roll call of the members.

1. COVID-19 Update

Mr. Burton provided an update regarding the recent rise in COVID-19 cases in the county and noted that the upsurge is concerning but not surprising, considering the recent reopening of the economy and a significant increase in testing; and that the numbers are within the required standards for the current reopening phase. He indicated that another outbreak in long-term care facilities appears to have been stabilized; that as the cases are occurring throughout the community, the public needs to be reminded that COVID-19 remains a serious issue; and that in efforts to keep the community safe, staff has partnered with the Cities of St. Petersburg and Tampa and Hillsborough County to create a regional outreach message regarding the importance of continuing precautionary measures.

Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County Director Dr. Ulyee Choe reviewed the COVID-19 statistics, indicating that there have been a total of 1,862 cases in the county with 101 deaths, 76 of which were long-term care facility residents; and that there has been a steep increase in daily case counts and the percentage of positive test results, with trends showing more cases appearing in congregate settings, populations under the age of 40, communities of color, and women.

Noting that absent treatment or a vaccine COVID-19 will be a concern for the foreseeable future, Dr. Choe underscored the importance of social distancing, wearing masks, and public messaging in order to protect vulnerable populations, and related that masks are available for distribution at the Health Department. Emergency Medical Services Medical Director Dr. Angus Jameson provided input, emphasizing that it is a novel virus; and that while properly worn masks and hand washing are beneficial, the primary tool in combating its spread is practicing distancing.

Responding to queries by the members, Drs. Choe and Jameson further discussed the statistics, contact tracing, vulnerable populations, recent studies regarding the virus effects, and plans for school reopening. They indicated that by monitoring trends they will be able to determine if the 124 cases reported for June 10, the highest daily count so far, was an

outlier; that the impact of the increase on the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) bed capacity will be known in approximately two weeks; and that the latest data shows that the percent positive has increased to close to four percent from the average of three percent that it has been throughout the pandemic.

Discussion ensued regarding the importance of wearing masks, protecting vulnerable populations, herd immunity, politicization of the issue, creative public messaging appealing to younger populations, and appreciating safety efforts of others. Mr. Burton discussed safety measures for County employees and possibly using the mottos of “safer at work” and “safer at play” in public messaging, noting how well the residents heeded the message of “safer at home.” At the request of Commissioners Long and Justice, Dr. Choe indicated that he will obtain information pertaining to the severity of symptoms for those who have been hospitalized with the virus and those who have recovered.

Sheriff Bob Gualtieri informed the members that 20 people, consisting of mostly jail staff and some inmates, have tested positive for the virus over the last 48 hours; and that significant measures must be taken to prevent further spread, including booking of arrested individuals only when necessary. Responding to queries by Commissioner Peters, he discussed the current challenges and related that the sick are being treated in internal respiratory isolation facilities; whereupon, Commissioner Peters commended the Sheriff and his staff for their work and dedication.

Responding to query by Commissioner Eggers, Drs. Jameson and Choe indicated that there is some concern with hospital staffing levels; and that while there was a decline in the availability of ICU beds and ventilators after the Safer at Home order expired, the equipment capacity has been stable over the last few weeks and will be closely monitored.

In response to comment by Chair Gerard, Mr. Burton related that more information regarding the public outreach campaign will be available next week; whereupon, he expressed appreciation to regional partners for working together to develop a positive message to the public.

ADJOURNMENT - 1:53 P.M.