

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
PANDEMIC & NATURAL DISASTER AD HOC COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 27TH DAY OF JANUARY, 2021

The Caddo Parish Commission met in a Pandemic & Natural Disaster Ad Hoc Committee Meeting, on the above date, at 3:00 p.m., via Zoom teleconference, with Mr. Jackson, Chairperson, presiding, and the following members in attendance constituting a quorum: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, Jackson, and Johnson (4). ABSENT: Commissioner Young (1).

The invocation was given by Mr. Epperson, and Mrs. Gage-Watts led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ADDITIONS

It was **moved by Mr. Burrell**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to expand the agenda and approve consideration of items under La.R.S. 42:17.1. Motion carried*, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Chavez, Johnson, and Young (3). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Hopkins and Jackson (2). ABSTAIN: None (0).

CERTIFICATE FOR TELECONFERENCE

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of Louisiana has declared a statewide Public Health emergency, inclusive of Caddo Parish, in Proclamation Number 25 JBE 2020; and,

WHEREAS, the Governor, has further extended that declaration via Proclamations Number 158 JBE 2020 and Number 159 JBE 2020; and

WHEREAS, R.S. 42:17.1 allows members of political subdivisions to participate in its meetings electronically under certain limited circumstances.

THEREFORE, in accordance with the Provisions of R.S. 42:17.1, the presiding officer of the Caddo Parish Commission hereby certifies that this meeting is to address matters that are:

- (a) directly related to the public Commission's response to the Coronavirus Pandemic and are critical to the health, safety, or welfare of the public.
- (b) that if they are delayed will cause curtailment of vital public services or severe economic dislocation and hardship.
- (c) critical to continuation of the business of the Commission and that are not able to be postponed to a meeting held in accordance with the other provisions of Open Meetings Law due to a legal requirement or other deadline that cannot be postponed or delayed by the public body.
- (d) critical or time-sensitive and have been determined by the undersigned should not be delayed;*
consideration of matters under Paragraph (d) will initially require a two-thirds vote of those members present).

DATE: January 25, 2021



Steven Jackson, Chair

Mr. Jackson opened up the floor for Citizens Comments. At this time, there were no public comments.

NEW BUSINESS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Committee and said the following items will be discussed:

- *Update and Discussion from Administration regarding US Treasury COVID-19 Rental Assistance Guidelines*

Mr. Jackson said that the Treasury has not release the updated guidelines, but they will be forthcoming. Mrs. Bryant said that there is no additional information aside from the guidelines mentioned at the last Regular Session.

Mr. Epperson asked that the Chair schedule a meeting at a later date to discuss the MPC conducting their meetings via teleconference. Mr. Jackson agreed.

- *Public Health Update on COVID-19*

Mr. Jackson introduced Dr. Chris Kevil to the Committee.

Dr. Kevil conducted a PowerPoint presentation regarding COVID-19. He said that this initiative started in March of 2020. LSU has converted the EVT Lab to the LSU BoS and Louisiana Board of Regents approved the Center of Excellence for Emerging Viral Threats (CEVT). They also established a convalescent plasma therapy program with LifeShare, which is the first in the State to do CP therapy. There are more than twenty active clinical trials underway, and they have performed one out three tests in LDH Region 7 and one out of four in LDH Regions 7&8 combined. They have genome sequenced 1,826 virus positive specimens—representing 65% of the Louisiana State sequences, and is still growing. Sequencing is important because of the different variants of the virus. They have administered 8,206 vaccines—working in collaboration with regional hospitals to administer. They have also established a Biosafety Level 3 (BSL3) facility within LSUHS to perform research with the virus.

He then talked about community and nursing home testing. They have development maps and tracking algorithms to follow where the testing is being conducted. From the end of March to today, they have been able to perform 255,000 tests. Most of the testing has been conducted in Caddo Parish. Their Center for Emerging & Viral Threats has conducted tests in 58 out of the 64 parishes, representing 90% of the State of Louisiana. They now have a tremendous amount of data and ability to look at specific regions and determine the specifics of the virus in that area. Dr. Kevil also said that they implemented a clear testing program for nursing homes, and now the positive rate has fallen below 1%.

Dr. Kevil then talked about community outreach. He said that they have free testing locations that they go to every week to offer citizens free testing. Unfortunately, people do not get tested until they feel like there's an issue. They encouraged all to get tested. It's free, easy, and simple with a 24-36 hour turn around, he said.

He then talked about Viral Genome Sequencing. Dr. Kevil presented a map indicating where the unique strain or lineage of the virus has been spread across the nation. He said that this provides data of where the virus is going. Currently, in the data they have, they have not seen the UK variant, South African variant, or Brazilian variant in this region. That does not mean they are not here, but it just means that they have not seen it yet. Dr. Kevil also said that there is strong evidence suggesting that we might be creating our own variant because there are a couple of key amino acids in the virus that get mutated and makes it more transmissible. Those mutations have been identified with

variants in North Louisiana, but are not necessarily seen in the mutation signatures of UK, South Africa, or Brazil.

Mr. Epperson wanted to know if there was a mandatory reporting process from LDH regarding positive COVID-19 cases. He gave an example of a person contracting COVID-19 in a public building and not making the public aware of it. Mr. Epperson said that the public should be made aware of any positive cases in public buildings. Dr. Kevil said that they follow all regulations, guidelines, and reporting requirements. He also explained that if they receive a positive test, they would not necessarily know where that person has been.

Mr. Cawthorne asked for additional information regarding the process in which the virus mutates. Dr. Kevil mentioned that they are not for certain just yet that this region has its own variant. As a virus goes through a population, it will change. Our part of the country may be different from other parts of the country. What pushes the virus to change is the host. If the host has a strong immune system and “clears” the virus, the virus will not have a chance to mutate. There are individuals in this community who do not have a strong immune system and will test positive for the virus multiple times. That virus in that person who is immunocompromised has a chance to change and mutate. If there is a virus that changes and has a better mechanism to infect people, then that virus will begin to spread. Most of the mutations in virus are dead end mutations.

Mr. Jackson wanted to know if there is still a need for testing. Dr. Kevil said that they need to sustain community testing. He also said that President Biden is shooting to have everyone vaccinated by the end of summer, however, the logistics of that may be a little more complicated. He said that there are approximately 27 million people in the United States who infected with the virus, which means there are several people left that the virus can be host to. They are unsure if the variants which are coming out are able to re-infect people, or if the virus is immune to the vaccination. He said that the testing allows them to do surveillance to identify what the virus is doing and who is getting the virus.

Mr. Jackson then wanted to know if there were any mitigation efforts combatting the virus. Dr. Kevil explained that wearing a mask helps reduce the spread of the virus, as well as social distancing. Other things that can help are good hygiene, washing hands, and being in well-ventilated spaces. Dr. Kevil also pointed out that the virus is spreading because of the community dispersing it.

- *Caddo Vaccination Plan & Community Testing Update*

Dr. Kevil explained that vaccinations are still being given in the Tier 1 A and Tier 1 B categories. Individuals 70 years or older are eligible, as well as those who are in the healthcare profession. This Thursday, they will have the ability to do drive-thru testing and administering vaccinations at Galilee Baptist Church. They are also continuing the State Fairgrounds vaccination site.

Mr. Jackson wanted to know when public officials will be able to receive the vaccinations. Dr. Kevil believes that it will be very soon, and it would fall under Tier 1 C. They are really trying to get through Tier 1 B first.

Mr. Jackson also wanted to know if the age for vaccinations has decreased. Dr. Kevil explained that people who are 65 years old substantial comorbidity conditions are eligible for the vaccine in Tier 1 C.

Mr. Jackson said that there has been discussion in the Biden Administration regarding involving local governments in the vaccination plan. He wants to know if there is anything Caddo Parish needs to do to start the discussions with Dr. Whyte or Dr. Ghali. Dr. Kevil said that those conversations should continue to happen.

Dr. Kevil also talked about certain criteria for the vaccination site. For example, the Pfizer vaccine has to be stored in -80°. They only have eight of those freezers right now. Those eight freezers have the capability to hold 500,000 Pfizer vaccines. The Moderna vaccine requires a regular freezer. The site must also have the capability to enter the data into the LDH site.

Mr. Jackson asked that Dr. Kevil provide the links to the Commission Clerk. He also expressed his appreciation to Dr. Kevil, Dr. Ghali, and the entire team for their work in combatting the virus.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 3:54 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Nations". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Assistant Commission Clerk