

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**UF Health Community Forum and Update regarding COVID-19**

**Remote meeting via teleconference**

 **January 8, 2021**

**11:00 am**

**Location:** Remote meeting via teleconference

**In attendance:** Council Members Rory Diamond, Terrance Freeman, Garrett Dennis and Michael Boylan (other council members may have been listening on the call but did not identify themselves as present)

**Also**: Dr. Leon Haley - Chief Executive Officer, UF Health Jacksonville; Senator Aaron Bean – Florida Senate and UF Health Jacksonville; Mayor Chris Hoffman – Jacksonville Beach; Mayor Ellen Glasser – Atlantic Beach; Vice Mayor Fred Jones – Neptune Beach; Lori Hershey - Duval County School Board ; Colleen Hampsey – Council Research

**Meeting Convened**: 11:00 am

Senator Bean welcomed the attendees to the 9th UF Health Community Forum and introduced Dr. Haley,Chief Executive Officer of UF Health Jacksonville. Dr. Haley provided an update on COVID 19 testing, hospitalizations/treatment and vaccinations. Dr. Haley relayed some of the pandemic timeline, wherein the spring was a time of preparation as the virus spread worldwide and the summer was busy with patients afflicted with COVID 19 (roughly 20% of the UF patient volume) with a high of 111 patients in hospital. The fall saw some improvements and a fuller appreciation of the impact of co-morbidities such as diabetes and high blood pressure. Now in January, the second surge is in effect and UF reached a new record for hospitalizations on Tuesday with 117 (550 in all hospitals in the city). Dr. Haley noted that UF hospitals are also treating patients with other health issues, providing elective surgeries, permitting limited visitors to patients and still have ICU capacity despite the surge in cases.

Dr. Haley emphasized the seriousness of the virus, with more than 360,000 deaths in the US overall - 4000 in one day this week - 22,000 deaths in Florida and 767 in Duval County. Dr. Haley said that treatments are more widely understood, including antibody treatments, steroid usage and the roll out of vaccines. Dr. Haley spoke about the emergence of COVID variants, which are believed to be less lethal but more transmissible even by asymptomatic individuals.

Regarding COVID 19 vaccinations, Dr. Haley said that there are two that have been approved - the Pfizer vaccine and the Moderna vaccine - and neither are created from live viruses. Dr. Haley stated that he himself has received both doses of the Pfizer vaccine, as he is on the frontline of care and also to set an example of the vaccine’s safety and efficacy. Pfizer is a two injection vaccine, given 21 days apart, and requires storage at -94 degrees. Moderna is a two injection vaccine, given 28 days apart, and can be stored in a standard freezer. Both are mRNA vaccines which contain material from the virus that causes COVID-19 that gives cells instructions for how to make a harmless protein that is unique to the virus. After cells make copies of the protein, they destroy the genetic material from the vaccine and recognize that the protein should not be there and build T-lymphocytes and B-lymphocytes that will remember how to fight the virus that causes COVID-19. UF Jacksonville received 20,000 doses from the state in December and has been administering them to hospital workers and UF Health patients over 65.

Dr. Haley said that COVID 19 vaccines: may rarely cause mild side effects (soreness at injection site), prevent COVID sickness but may not stop transmission, are safe for pregnant and breast feeding women, and are compatible with the known COVID variants. Dr. Haley cautioned that herd immunity is not certain, so mass vaccinations to as many people as possible are needed to address this pandemic. He also made a point of praising the dedicated staff at UF Health for their tireless efforts over the past year.

Questions and Answers

Dr. Haley was asked about allergic reactions to COVID vaccines. He said that such reactions are rare, but that those who have experienced such things in the past may want to wait on receiving the vaccine. Dr. Haley also said that those who have had COVID and recovered should still get the vaccine 90 days or more after testing positive.

Susan Grich, President and CEO Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida, asked about PR communications to assure the public of vaccine safety, particularly in communities of color. Dr. Haley said that is the reason he received his vaccine on camera.

Mayor Glasser asked about the scale of vaccine distributions and when/how they will be available city wide and for those who may not be able to travel downtown. Dr. Haley explained the issue with the limited supply reaching the prioritized population, and said that both the City and UF Health are ready for expanded implementation once supply catches up with demand. UF Health has the capacity to administer 1500 doses per day.

Nancy Frasier, UF Health Leadership Council, spoke about a partnership between Publix stores in Central Florida and the state for vaccines. This program has not yet been planned in the North Florida area. Ms. Frasier also asked about antibody testing, to which Dr. Haley said that even those with antibodies should be vaccinated to boost immunity.

Prior to concluding the teleconference, Dr. Haley reminded everyone of the current viral surge and said to continue to maintain social distance, wear masks and wash hands.

The next forum teleconference will be February 4, and the UF Virtual Gala fundraiser event is February 6, 2021.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 11:33 am

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research

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