

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

117 WEST DUVAL STREET, SUITE 425

4TH FLOOR, CITY HALL

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202

904-255-5137

**UF HEALTH JACKSONVILLE TELECONFERENCE - COVID 19 UPDATE**

**Meeting Minutes**

**February 11, 2021**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Location:** Telephone conference call

**In attendance:** Council Members Brenda Priestly Jackson, Terrance Freeman, Reggie Gaffney, Ron Salem (other council members may have been listening to the teleconference but not identified)

**Also**: Dr. Leon Haley and Aaron Bean - UF Health Jacksonville; Jeff Clements – Council Research Division; State Senator Audrey Gibson; State Representative Tracie Davis; Mayor Ellen Glasser – City of Atlantic Beach; Mayor Chris Hoffman – City of Jacksonville Beach

**Meeting Convened**: 10:00 a.m.

Dr. Leon Haley, CEO of UF Health Jacksonville, opened the teleconference by welcoming the attendees. COVID has been a tremendous disruptor of normal life, but there is beginning to be light at the end of the tunnel. UF Health’s incident command center has been in operation since March 2, 2020 (today is day 343) and they are gradually shifting from the initial response phase concentrated on preparations and patient care to the vaccination phase. There have been 2.3 million deaths from COVID 19 worldwide and 28,000 deaths in Florida. There have been 85,000 cases in Jacksonville and nearly 1,000 deaths. Jacksonville patients ranged in age from infant to 106, have been more female than male, and more African-American than white. 61 patients are hospitalized at UF Health today after the hospital was down to only 6 last June before a post-July 4th spike. The Thanksgiving Day/Christmas/New Year holiday season led to another spike in early January, but it’s beginning to slowly decline again. Jacksonville’s positive COVID testing rate is currently 5.5%.

Two vaccines (Moderna and Pfizer) currently have emergency approval from the FDA for use. The state of Florida designated 5 hospitals around the state (including UF Health Jacksonville) to get 20,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine as soon as it was approved in September to distribute to front line health care workers and to share with other health care providers in the community. UF Health has a great relationship with the other Jacksonville hospital CEOs and with the Mayor’s office. The next priority set by the state was for vaccinating seniors age 65+. UF Health and the other hospitals have been relying on community leaders and faith leaders to reach out to the minority community to encourage vaccinations, given their historical skepticism about vaccines. A second round of Pfizer doses was received in late December and distribution is nearing the end of that supply. Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have shown 95% effectiveness at preventing death from COVID, but we don’t know how it affects transmission of the virus. Dr. Haley urged everyone to keep masking, social distancing and hand washing as the best, simplest precaution against transmission. The next wave of vaccine availability from the state will go to pharmacy chains and supermarkets, and hospitals will no longer be the centerpieces for distribution. Two additional vaccines developed by AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson should get federal approval in the next few weeks and become available shortly thereafter. None of the current vaccines have been tested and approved for children under age 16. There are 3 major variant strains of COVID and there is less information about whether the current vaccines are effective against them. Dr. Haley urged taking whatever vaccine is offered to you to begin getting protection. Double masking is a good practice. Keep distancing and hand washing as always as a precaution.

Herd immunity will likely occur when 70-80% of the population is vaccinated. Further research will help determine if booster vaccinations are required later in the year for those who have received their first two doses. The health care system will be able to do lots more vaccinating when there are 4 or more approved vaccines. Dr. Haley urged everyone to continue (or resume) going to their health care provider to get their usual medical care – that’s very important.

In non-COVID news, the UF Health Community Health Alliance is still in full operation and assisting people with many needs. UF Health’s Wildlight hospital on the Northside opened in the fall and work is underway on numerous downtown hospital renovation projects.

Q&A

Council Member Salem said the Johnson & Johnson vaccine looks promising for release soon and asked when vaccination s will begin for persons below age 65. Dr. Haley said J&J has lots of vaccine prepared and ready to go when they get FDA approval; the under-65 population will begin to be vaccinated when the J&J and AstraZeneca vaccines are approved and supply substantially increases. In response to a question from Mr. Salem about evidence of any differences in side effects from the vaccines between African Americans and whites, Dr. Haley said there is not, but in general people seem to having more side effects from the second doses than from the first, especially with the Moderna vaccine.

Leah Shields of First Coast News asked about the distribution of the vaccines intended for people under age 65 with underlying health conditions. Dr. Haley said UF Health Jacksonville got 1,000 doses for that purpose and all have been distributed to eligible patients.

Rep. Tracy Davis asked if there are any differences in Pfizer versus Moderna side effects. Dr. Haley said the effects are the same for both vaccines - injection site swelling, fever and chills, headaches, and general unwell feeling, but nothing serious, typically short-lived, and not experienced by everyone. He said that persons who have had COVID should wait 90 days before getting vaccinated because there is some evidence that side effects are stronger for those who have previously contracted the virus. In response to a question from Rep. Davis about whether there have been any infant COVID deaths in Jacksonville, Dr. Haley said he didn’t know the age of the youngest reported case, but the numbers of children contracting the virus have been very small overall.

Phyllis Tousey asked if there any research data on COVID vaccines making people carriers and transmitting the virus to others. Dr. Haley said research still underway, but the general recommendation is for vaccinated persons to stay masked just in case.

Janet Johnson asked how to make a reservation to be vaccinated. Dr. Haley recommended the state’s website to access reservations for the Publix/Winn Dixie/drugstore distribution system. The hospitals use a different system.

UF Health’s next teleconference update will be on March 11th.

**Meeting adjourned:** 10:32 a.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

[jeffc@coj.net](mailto:jeffc@coj.net) 904-255-5137

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