

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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

**Remote Meeting via Teleconference**

 **June 8, 2021**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Location:** Telephone conference call

**In attendance:** Council Member Brenda Priestly Jackson (other council members may have been listening to the teleconference but not identified)

**Also**: Dr. Leon Haley and Aaron Bean – UF Health Jacksonville; State Senator Audrey Gibson; State Representative Cord Byrd; Mayor Ellen Glasser – City of Atlantic Beach; Honorable Mia Jones – Chief Executive Officer of AGAPE Community Health Center; Colleen Hampsey – Council Research Division

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

Dr. Leon Haley, CEO of UF Health Jacksonville, opened the teleconference by welcoming the attendees. He said that COVID disrupted most of normal life for over a year, but there is light at the end of the tunnel. UF Health’s incident command center has been in operation since March 2, 2020 and they are gradually seeing a decrease in cases, hospitalizations and deaths. Dr. Haley took a moment to praise the dedication of the hospital staff, who have gone above and beyond during the pandemic.

There have more than 600,000 COVID-19 deaths in the US, and roughly 100,000 cases in Jacksonville and nearly 1,400 deaths. In the UF Health hospital system there are currently 17 patients hospitalized - a low since the pandemic began, at one point in the winter there were 122 hospitalized patients. Going forward, the daily reporting of COVID cases will occur weekly instead. As the positive cases are decreasing, some of the testing centers are preparing to close. There will be testing available in certain locations, and in hospitals. Dr. Haley highlighted the positive impact from vaccines; they are effectively decreasing the prevalence of positive cases, and greatly reducing the number of hospitalizations and deaths. Dr. Haley also noted the unpredictability of the virus, wherein some patients are asymptomatic, and others suffer greatly or do not survive, and many endure long term symptoms.

COVID-19 vaccines are now widely available for those over the age of 12, and in the US 47% of the eligible population have received two doses. In Florida 40% are fully vaccinated, and in Duval County 36% are fully vaccinated. Further research will help determine if booster vaccinations are required later in the year for those who have received their first two doses. Dr. Haley noted that scientists are learning about the virus and the vaccine effects in real time. Researchers are also testing vaccine safety/effectiveness in children under age 12. Dr. Haley said that under usual circumstances, 80% vaccination rates are needed to reach ‘herd’ immunity, though that may not likely by July because of vaccine hesitancy. In conjunction with the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, UF Health will be rolling out an awareness campaign targeting minorities, younger individuals and others who are resistant to vaccines for varied reasons.

In non-COVID news, UF HealthWildlight Center on the Northside is operational, there will be a return to in-person events soon, there will be a new brain wellness center for veterans, and work is underway on numerous downtown hospital renovation projects. Dr. Haley also mentioned the UF Health food pharmacy, where those who need it may receive and fresh food by prescription. Dr. Haley urged everyone to stay safe, be aware of COVID variants, and to keep hand washing, and masking in some indoor settings and when traveling.

Q&A

One question from the public was whether those who recovered from COVID should still get the vaccine. Dr. Haley said they should, as the natural antibodies only last for an undetermined/finite amount of time. He also noted that there have been reports of patients with long haul COVID symptoms getting vaccinated and then finding those symptoms alleviated.

Mia Jones asked about the use of monoclonal antibody treatment, and Dr. Haley said that it is appropriate for limited use in a small group of patients who meet specific criteria.

Before adjourning the teleconference, Dr. Haley reminded everyone that hurricane season is underway and that everyone should be prepared.

**Meeting adjourned:** 10:27 a.m.

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research Division

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