

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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4TH FLOOR, CITY HALL

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202

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**UF Health Community Call**

**April 7, 2022**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Location:** Telephone conference call

**In attendance:** CM Ferraro; other Council Members may have been listening to the teleconference but not identified

**UF Health:** Dr. Elisa Zenni, Interim Senior Associate Dean for Educational Affairs, College of Medicine Jacksonville; Dr. Patel, UF Health Jacksonville; Chad Nielson MPH, UF Public Health Officer; Russell Armistead, CEO of UF Health Jacksonville

**Also**: Florida Senator Aaron Bean – UF Health Jacksonville; Florida Senator Audrey Gibson; Mayor Ellen Glasser – City of Atlantic Beach; Charlie Cofer, Public Defender Florida’s 4th Judicial Circuit; Lori Hershey, DCSB; Colleen Hampsey – Council Research Division

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

Senator Bean welcomed the group and explained the format for asking questions.

Russell Armistead, CEO of UF Health Jacksonville, spoke about the groundbreaking for a new 124 bed tower on the Northside, and about three urgent care centers currently under construction throughout the city. Mr. Armistead said that UF Health Jacksonville is slated to receive $80 million in state funds this year for a new trauma center, pending Governor DeSantis’ signature. He also mentioned the upcoming annual gala, and UF Health Jacksonville’s third recognition received for diversity/inclusion and equity. Mr. Armistead explained their staff shortage, there are 170 open positions mostly for nurses (roughly twice the normal number of openings). The nurse shortage may be attributed to the pandemic increasing demand and compensation for traveling nurses.

The UF Health pandemic emergency command center has been in operation for 760 days. Chad Nielson, UF Health Public Health Officer, provided an update and said that there are currently 3 Covid patients in their hospitals (incidental cases, admitted for other causes but tested positive). As a comparison, they had 60 Covid patients at the time of the February 18, 2022 Community Call, and at the January 14th call there were 136 Covid patients in their hospital, and 160 staff members out for Covid related reasons. Mr. Armistead said that there was only one staff person out today for Covid reasons. Mr. Nielson noted that numbers across the county and state are at new lows.

Dr. Patel, UF Health Jacksonville, spoke about the importance of vaccinations and boosters. He said that there has been a decrease in hospitalizations, but that masks are still advised for high-risk folks especially in crowds or indoor spaces. Dr. Patel mentioned various treatment options, such as anti-viral medications and new versions of monoclonal antibody treatments appropriate for variants. He talked about vaccines for young children and said that Moderna is going to ask for authorization soon and then the FDA will review the data before approval/disapproval.

Dr. Elisa Zenni, Interim Senior Associate Dean for Educational Affairs spoke about various recent UF Health events: a celebration of National Doctor’s Day, Match Day (for new residents), the graduation ceremony and research awards in June, and the new Haley Leadership Award for residents and faculty (named in honor of the late Dr. Leon Haley).

Q&A

There was a question regarding Covid testing using throat swabs rather than nasal swabs. Dr. Patel said that throat swabbing has its advantages because of where in the body the virus gathers, but that the tests on the market were designed to be used as nasal swabs so to use it on one’s throat could bring a false positive or injury. He said new throat swab tests are being developed.

Mayor Glasser asked about causes for the nurse shortage, and Mr. Armistead said it was due to multiple factors, including the demand for traveling nurses and burnout from multiple years of pandemic. Ms. Glasser also asked what percentage of UF Health Jacksonville staff are vaccinated and Mr. Armistead replied they are at 95 percent vaccinated right now.

Senator Gibson asked about data on the effect of Covid on young children. Dr. Patel said that the data for that age group is not robust, due in part to the lack of testing and mild symptomology.

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

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research Division

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Posted 4.11.22 5:00 pm