



Richland County
 Coronavirus Ad Hoc Committee
 May 24, 2021 – 5:00 PM
 Zoom Meeting
 2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

Yvonne McBride	Paul Livingston	Joe Walker	Gretchen Barron	Chakisse Newton
District 3	District 4	District 6	District 10	District 10

Committee Members Present: Gretchen Barron, Chair; Paul Livingston and Chakisse Newton

Others Present: Allison Terracio, Cheryl English, Jesica Mackey, Derrek Pugh, Andrea Mathis, Michelle Onley, Kyle Holsclaw, Tamar Black, Ashiya Myers, John Thompson, Lori Thomas, Randy Pruitt, Stacey Hamm, Ronaldo Myers, Mike King, Bill Davis, James Hayes, Geo Price, Dante Roberts, Dwight Hanna, Leonardo Brown, Michael Byrd, Michael Maloney, Angela Weathersby, Dale Welch and Clayton Voignier

1. **Call to Order** – Ms. Barron called the meeting to order at approximately 5:00 PM.
2. **Approval of Minutes: April 28, 2021** – Mr. Livingston moved, seconded by Ms. Newton, to approve the minutes as distributed.

In Favor: Livingston, Barron and Newton

Not Present: McBride and J. Walker

The vote in favor was unanimous.

3. **Adoption of Agenda** – Mr. Brown requested Item 4(d) “FEMA Vaccine Site Update” be moved to Item #1 to accommodate the Deputy Incident Commander’s schedule.

Mr. Livingston moved, seconded by Ms. Newton, to adopt the agenda as amended.

In Favor: Livingston, Barron, and Newton

Not Present: McBride and J. Walker

The vote in favor was unanimous.

4. **ITEMS FOR ACTION**

- a. **FEMA Vaccine Site Update** – Mr. Brown introduced the Deputy Incident Commander, Randy Stewart.

Mr. Stewart stated they have been working at the CDC site at the Columbia Place. The site was scheduled to be open for 8 weeks, and they have been there for approximately 5 ½ weeks. He indicated for the first 6 weeks they would be utilizing the Pfizer vaccine. On Thursday, May 27th,

they will be switching to the Jansen vaccine for 2 weeks. He noted the flow of traffic, and the operations have worked well. When the program started, the participation numbers were lower than expected, but it has picked up. As of Sunday, May 23rd, approximately 12,368 have received their initial dose, 5,458 have received the second dose, and the number of Richland County residents is 14,772.

Ms. Newton inquired if people will still be able to get their 2nd dose of Pfizer at this location.

Mr. Stewart responded, the 2 weeks they are administering the Jansen vaccine, people will not be able to get the 2nd dose. After those 2 weeks, they will still be there on a smaller scale to provide the 2nd dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

Mr. Livingston inquired if they would continue to promote the site, and is there anything that Richland County can do to help.

Mr. Stewart responded they were working with Public Information Office. There are road signs, interstate and radio ads, and on the local news.

Ms. Newton inquired about the specific date the site will close.

Mr. Stewart responded the Jansen vaccine will end on June 9th, and the 2nd dose of Pfizer will end on June 26th.

Ms. Barron stated anything the County can do to assist with getting the message out will be critically important.

Ms. Mackey inquired about DHEC taking over the site.

Mr. Stewart responded the FEMA site, with the National Guard support, will end June 9th. After FEMA leaves, DHEC will take over the site for to administer the 2nd dose of Pfizer vaccines.

Mr. Brown inquired if a person needs their 2nd dose, do they need to have had their first shot at Columbia Place Mall, or would the appointments be open to anyone.

Ms. Campbell responded, after people receive their first shot, they are given an appointment for the 2nd dose. If someone is with them and needs their 2nd dose, they will not be turned away, but they are planning for the ones that have been given an appointment.

- b. **COVID-19 Memorial** – Mr. Brown stated, on p. 14, is an outline of the potential plan for the memorial. The plan is to have an outdoor event, with tents set up, in front of 2020 Hampton St. on Thursday, July 15th at 5:00 PM. During the time that attendees are gathering there will be a musical selection, followed by opening remarks by the Chair of Council/Coronavirus Chair. The remaining program would be, as follows:

1. Invocation – Local Faith Leader
2. Council Remarks – Councilmember(s)
3. Reading of Resolution – Councilmember (i.e. Council Chair)
4. Community Remarks (Invitations to all Mayors within Richland County)
5. Residents who had a family member pass from COVID-19
6. Residents who survived COVID-19
7. Reading of a Memorial Plaque – Councilmember(s)
8. Wreath Laying – Councilmembers/Musical Selection

9. Moment of Silence
10. Closing Remarks – Councilmember
11. Benediction – Local Faith Leader

Mr. Brown noted the proposed plan is open to modifications.

Ms. Mackey inquired if we could consider adding remarks to acknowledge healthcare professionals that continued to work on the frontlines, especially those in healthcare facilities.

Mr. Brown inquired if adding remarks on the memorial plaque would address Ms. Mackey's request.

Ms. Mackey responded she would like remarks added to the program, as well as the memorial plaque.

Ms. Barron suggested adding it in during the opening remarks or the Councilmembers' remarks.

POINT OF PERSONAL PRIVILEGE: Ms. Newton noted she voted in favor of the COVID Memorial at the previous meeting, but she was experiencing technical difficulties.

Ms. Newton noted, in the draft wording on the plaque, where it lists the essential workers, she would like to include teachers and those who prepared food. She noted she would like the list to be more inclusive and broader.

Ms. Barron inquired if just identifying essential workers would suffice, or should we be specific.

Ms. Newton responded she did not want to remove the "doctors, nurses, and emergency personnel", but like the list to be more inclusive.

Mr. Livingston noted we could probably cover everybody with 4 or 5 different groups.

Ms. Barron noted if they include broader groups we should be able to cover everyone.

Mr. Livingston moved, seconded by Ms. Newton, to support staff's recommendations, with the modifications proposed by committee members.

Ms. Mackey noted she wants to ensure this ceremony could be livestreamed and recorded.

In Favor: Livingston, Barron and Newton.

Not Present: McBride and J. Walker

The vote in favor was unanimous.

- c. **Mask Ordinance/Safety Plan** – Ms. Barron noted this was a continuation of what was discussed during the Council meetings about either extending the mask ordinance or allowing it to expire. It is her understanding that Mr. Brown has plan, which takes into consideration the safety of everyone coming into the building.

Mr. Brown noted there was additional information in the packet he wanted to walk the committee through. The information will be used to modify the draft plan. Before the next Council meeting, a more up-to-date plan will be presented that can be utilized specifically for Richland County. The

information in the committee's packet specifically addresses workplaces, and was provided by OSHA. The CDC issued new guidance, which OSHA was reviewing to see how the workplace would be impacted by the CDC's guidelines. The categories in the plan are areas the County has used to put the County's initiative in place. He noted the County has, and will in the near future, comply with the CDC and OSHA guidelines.

Mr. Livingston inquired how the County informs employees of guidelines and expectations.

Mr. Brown responded, in terms of the protocols, the information comes from his office. In addition, Human Resource has sent emails and information in their newsletters.

Ms. Mackey inquired about a plan for when the public comes into the building to ensure the employees are safe. For instance, not letting too many people into the building.

Mr. Brown responded he plans on meeting with the Treasurer and Auditor to discuss capacity. The conversation will also include the Sheriff's Department, who will enforce the restrictions. There was a previous discussion, and a desire to limit capacity, but there was no comments on who would ensure the capacity levels and what those levels should be.

Ms. Mackey stated they should look at adding this to the plan as we look at opening back up to the public. She inquired if the plan would address monitoring of COVID numbers and making adjustments if the numbers start to rise. In addition, if a department has several people that contract COVID, how would that department be handled?

Mr. Brown responded those issues were dealt with throughout the course of the pandemic. His recommendation would be not to put in hard numbers since guidelines keep changing, and it could be hard to follow those guidelines.

Ms. Mackey inquired if the County would continue to provide PPE to staff, as well as continuing to provide online services to residents.

Mr. Brown responded they have purchased PPE, and will continue, as necessary, to provide cloth masks and shields. The online services will still be available. He noted he has received requests on how to make online services more accessible.

Ms. Newton inquired if anything was done to improve ventilation at 2020 Hampton Street.

Mr. Brown responded the systems have not had anything added to them. The system does have HEPA filters as a part of the circulation.

Mr. Pruitt responded the building does have HEPA filters and the system has been tested. There was no detection of any type of virus transference through the systems.

Ms. Newton inquired if Mr. Brown was going to submit the re-opening plan at the next Council meeting..

Mr. Brown responded in the affirmative.

Ms. Newton requested to see the draft ahead of the Council meeting. She inquired if Council will take action on the plan.

Mr. Brown responded he is not sure Council wants to weigh in and provide specific action, but he would welcome feedback from Councilmembers.

Ms. Barron inquired, when the building re-opens, will appointments continue.

Mr. Brown responded his idea would be that appointments would not be required. There may be departments, and citizens, that prefer appointments. He did not feel like the appointments should be taken away, but it would not restrict someone from just walking in.

Ms. Barron inquired if the County was interested in producing a video of what to expect, and the protocols, when citizens arrive at 2020 Hampton Street.

Mr. Brown responded this is a good point. There are some things that need to change due to the new guidance, but there is already a video just as Ms. Barron described.

Ms. Barron stated the County should not just make the video, but push it out to ensure everyone knows about it.

- d. **In-Person Council Meetings** – Ms. Barron stated as Mr. Brown is planning to re-open to the public on July 1st, Council should go back into Chambers on July 13th. She noted a discussion took place about putting up temporary shields on the dais.

Mr. Brown stated, if we were to go back into Chambers on July 13th, CDC guidelines would be followed. If the guidelines change prior to the meeting, any necessary modifications will be made.

The following factors need to be taken into consideration:

1. Face coverings will be required in Chambers;
2. Number of Attendees;
3. Physical (Social) Distancing Limitations;
4. Length of meeting;
5. Mixture of vaccinated and unvaccinated attendees;
6. All attendees will be required to complete temperature screening;
7. All attendees who are not members of the same house or workgroup will be asked to distance themselves from others;
8. All surfaces will be sanitized before Council meets with a 24-hour disinfectant application;
9. Temporary protective shields will be place on the dais, podium and staff work tables in Chambers;
10. Provide face coverings for individuals who are frequently speaking;
11. Make hand sanitizer available in Chambers; and
12. After all meeting have been concluded, Chambers will be deep cleaned using an electrostatic application treatment.

Mr. Livingston inquired if there were any other meetings for Council on July 13th and if Councilmembers would be required to wear face coverings with the shields in place.

Mr. Brown responded the CDC would not require the masks because the shields would be around them, but they could wear a mask if they chose to.

Ms. Mathis responded there were no Council meetings before July 13th.

Ms. Newton inquired about the capacity of Chambers, and how capacity levels would be monitored.

Mr. Brown responded staff was looking at how to provide more space for citizens to enter the Chambers during the meetings. He noted he would suggest having staff work remotely during the meetings. The CDC guidelines do not address the percentage of capacity in an enclosed space.

Ms. Newton inquired how meetings would be streamed to those who did not attend in person.

Ms. Mackey inquired how committee meetings would be held.

Ms. Barron responded in-person would apply to all meetings.

Mr. Brown responded the sanitizing products used does not have to be reapplied in a 24-hour timespan. Chambers would be treated prior to the meetings. There would be sanitizing wipes in Chambers, as well.

Ms. Mackey inquired if attendees should enter and exit Chambers between meetings.

Mr. Brown responded they would not be required to leave. The product that will be used is a high touch product that does not require reapplying.

Ms. Newton noted most committee meetings are not held in Chambers. She inquired how those committee meetings will be handled.

Mr. Brown responded the same protocols could be used for the different locations and extra protection could be provided. He noted we would need to know how many extra Councilmembers might attend, in order to adequately prepare.

Mr. Livingston inquired about how Executive Session would be handled since the room used is small and enclosed. There have been times when Councilmembers did not leave Chambers, but the audience left Chambers.

Mr. Brown responded he was thinking about that issue, especially with staff potentially attending the meetings "virtually". He noted he was still working on a recommendation for Council's consideration.

- e. **ERAP Update/Community Engagement** – Mr. Brown stated as of May 21st, the County has approved \$2,256,000 in Emergency Rental Assistance Program funding. The County is still on target to meet their projection. On p. 30, there is a breakdown of applications by zip codes, which was requested at the previous meeting.

Ms. Barron stated she has had conversations with Mr. Brown about community engagement and some creative ways to get this information out into the community. Last week, there was a faith-based meeting with a few churches in attendance. However, she would have preferred to see a greater impact. She hopes staff will revisit engaging the faith-based community.

Ms. English noted, when she spoke with several of the associations, many of them have foundations in place that have been servicing the community for years.

- f. **Relief Funding Expense Plan Update** – Mr. Brown stated NACo has put out information on the American Rescue Plan, which is included in the agenda packet. In addition, the Government Financial Officers’ Association also put out some guidance. Right now there are multiple programs that potentially can be used. There is no specific guidance from the Treasury. One of the things he would like to consider is stipends for essential workers who worked on the frontlines.

Ms. Newton inquired about the amount of funding for the County

Mr. Brown responded the County has received approximately \$80M. The funds will be received in two tranches. The County will receive the first half, and then about 12 months later receive the second half.

Ms. Newton inquired if there were deadlines when the funds need to be expended, are we able to use the funds in advance of the allocation, or are we being told to wait until the funds are received.

Mr. Brown responded the funds must be obligated, not incurred, by December 31, 2024. Recovery funds must be spent, and all work performance must be completed by December 31, 2026. He stated he would prefer to receive the funds before any spending occurred. Other agencies are already spending their anticipated funding.

Mr. Livingston noted there were State funds for broadband. He inquired what the County is doing to make sure we get some of the funds the State has in regards to the recovery.

Mr. Brown responded the County has had one provider inquire if the funding is available. A member of the Senate had a conversation with staff about available funding coming down the pipe. He noted staff was planning to assign a staff member to lobby on behalf of the County

Mr. Livingston stated there are other counties lining up talking to legislators and other elected officials to try to get the State appropriations. He noted the County needs to have someone working on the County’s behalf. In addition, there are earmarks at the Federal level, as it related to recovery funds.

Mr. Brown responded he was not familiar with the earmarks, but he would have someone research this matter.

Ms. Barron inquired if Mr. Brown was aware of checks being dispersed to counties.

Mr. Brown responded, as of Friday, the County received an allocation of \$40M.

Ms. Thomas confirmed the County did receive \$40,375,000. A second allocation should be received in approximately 12 months.

Ms. Barron stated the County needs to move forward with putting things in place now that we have the funds available.

Ms. Thomas noted the Treasury is taking questions/comments to get final guidance. The final guidance should be available by July 16th. The employee stipend is relatively solid, but there are still lots of areas that are not quite as structured. As we get the information, staff will pass that along to Council.

Ms. Newton noted she would appreciate the County exploring sewer infrastructure.

Mr. Livingston requested Mr. Brown to begin providing Council preliminary recommendations for use of the funds.

5. **Adjournment** – The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:45 PM.