

**MINUTES OF THE HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**March 16, 2020**  
**City Hall Auditorium**

**Present:** Chairman Litten, Councilmembers Kepple & Rader

**Also Present:** Councilmembers Bullock, Neff, O'Malley, & Shachner, Terry Allan (Commissioner of the Cuyahoga County Board of Health) via telephone line, Mayor George, Director Corrigan, Acting Director Schuster, Fire Chief Dunphy, Director Ducu, Director Gelsomino, Assistant Director Swallow, & members of the public

**Call to Order:** 6:30 p.m.

**AGENDA**

**Approval of the minutes of the May 13, 2019 Health & Human Services Committee**

Chairman Litten made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Rader to approve the minutes from the May 13, 2019 Health & Human Services Committee.

All members voted in favor. Motion passed. The minutes were approved.

**Public health emergency planning update**

Mr. Allan remotely gave an overview of the COVID-19 crisis and action taken by the Cuyahoga County Board of Health (CCBH) to coordinating a response. CCBH has been working internally on identifying cases, following up on their close contacts, and isolating those that are ill. CCBH has been providing information to EMS and school systems throughout the county and answering their questions. 24 cases of the state's 50 are located in Cuyahoga County. Mr. Allan believes the high number is because testing is more prevalent in this county compared to others throughout the state. Cleveland Clinic can turn around test results in a day and private labs can turn them around in 3-5 days. Metro Health will soon be testing as well. Testing is only being done for those exhibiting symptoms. The at-risk population includes seniors, those with chronic conditions, those undergoing treatments that involve immune system repression, etc. Mr. Allan explained the reasoning beyond Governor DeWine's decision to close schools, restaurants, and public places. These actions were taken to avoid people congregating in areas, cross-contaminating, and spreading the virus and overwhelming the healthcare system. These efforts have been undertaken to "flatten the curve." People should wash their hands frequently and stay 6 feet away from each other. People are encouraged to work remotely if possible and social distance. Local businesses should be supported via online ordering and payment. He provided contact information to various local and state helplines and websites for information on the virus and current crisis.

Councilmember Bullock noted that a judge in Franklin County has directed the Secretary of State to postpone tomorrow's primary election and hold it on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020.

Councilmember Kepple asked if Metro Health was offering mental health services and if CCBH is seeing an uptick in a need for those services. Mr. Allan stated that CCBH is seeing a need to connect people with community services and that the Metro Health help line is free and available to all.

Director Gelsomino noted that her department is converting from congregant meals to meal delivery. Typically they have served 80 individuals. She added the precautions that her workers and volunteers are taking, especially the social distancing aspects. She asked if they can be doing anything else. Mr. Allan indicated that the precautions they are taking seem adequate and highlighted the importance of keeping tabs on seniors in the community.

Chairman Litten inquired as to things Mr. Allan has shared with the community to avoid causing undo alarm. Mr. Allan noted that its important to highlight the prevalence of community transmission, especially now, as it is flu season. Individuals should stay home if they have symptoms. He recalled the stigmatization of individuals that occurred during the ebola crisis that occurred several years ago.

Councilmember Rader asked for guidance on how people can volunteer during the crisis, as people have reached out to him inquiring for opportunities. Mr. Allan indicated that it would be best to connect them with the county's emergency operation center to see what sort of capacity is needed.

Mr. Allan exited the meeting.

Councilmember O'Malley indicated that his intention was to keep the full Council meeting that evening as brief as possible and defer all non-essential items, so he encouraged members to ask questions during this time period.

Mayor George gave an overview of what her administration has been doing to address the crisis. Her team has compiled a situation report and has installed a recorded telephone line that the public can call for updated information on the crisis. She is working on a letter to send out to every home in Lakewood to access as many residents as possible and reach those who do not frequent the Internet. She is setting up a Recovery Lakewood Taskforce to help during the aftermath of this crisis.

Chief Dunphy gave an overview of the Fire Department's process to address the crisis. They are following recommendations put out by the CDC, WHO, and state level agencies on the matter. His department is taking extra precaution when dealing with senior citizens. The department is fairly stocked with PPE, but they are already ordering more because of 2-3 week delays on masks, Tyvek suits, etc.

Chairman Litten asked Chief Dunphy to explain what happens protocol wise when a workplace is found to have someone there who tests positive for COVID-19. Chief Dunphy indicated that the department is following a CDC public health flowchart. Currently, there is no one in the city that has been diagnosed with the virus. Self-isolation has been recommended to individuals in the event they exhibit symptoms.

Councilmember Rader asked what somebody is supposed to do in the event he or she exhibits systems. Chief Dunphy indicated that people should call their primary care physician first. Mayor George highlighted telemedicine options at all of the regions major hospitals as well. Councilmember Rader also inquired about a moratorium on eviction hearings in the city. Mayor George indicated that Judge Carroll has met with the Supreme Court regarding the issue and that she is awaiting further information from him.

Councilmember Kepple asked what kind of leave an employee is afforded if they are in an at-risk category, but his or her job is not feasible for them to work from home. Mayor George stated that employees are to use their sick leave, but that her administration is working on a policy specific to that situation.

Councilmember O'Malley asked if there has been any talk of a statewide lockdown, similar to that taking place in San Francisco. Mayor George indicated there have been no directives, but she does not have an answer for the question at that time.

Councilmember Bullock stated his hope to contribute to the efforts to assist small business. Mayor George stated she believes a member of Council should serve on the taskforce. Councilmember Kepple noted information on the governor's webpage for low interest small business loans and expedited unemployment resources.

Councilmember O'Malley indicated that a Franklin county judge actually denied the request to move the Ohio primary. For the moment the primary election was on for the following day.

Mayor George stated that city hall is moving towards essential operations and having staff working remotely if possible.

Director Gelsomino gave an update on the Division of Aging and the crisis' effect on the senior population. The Division is no longer allowing clients to come in, but it is using a robo-call system to reach out to seniors currently receiving meals and continue delivery to them. They are looking at frozen meals being delivered to seniors. The Division is collecting volunteer information and will be issuing an application for those interested in helping. Division staff will be calling the 900 seniors receiving services from the city on a weekly basis, to ensure they are getting follow up support.

Chief Dunphy noted that the Division of Fire cannot release any information pertaining to a patient getting COVID-19. He stated that it is important that the public be reassured as rumors spread.

Mayor George added that there may be a future need to call an emergency Council meeting to pass legislation that gives her and the Council President leeway during the crisis in regard to funding. Assistant Director Swallow indicated that she has drafted legislation that would allow Council to pass legislation during this time period with just a majority of members, instead of the past two thirds requirement. She also drafted legislation that mirrored the city of Brooklyn's that allows flexibility on paying employees and providing benefits during the crisis.

Chairman Litten made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Rader to adjourn.

All members voted in favor. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.