

City Health Board Meeting Discussion Record
April 23, 2020

Voting members in attendance: Dr. Mary Milroy, City Manager Amy Leon and Mayor Nathan Johnson.

Ex Officio members in attendance: City Attorney Ross Den Herder, Police Commander Jason Foote, Community Development Manager Brad Bies and Community and Economic Development Director Dave Mingo.

Introductions by Amy Leon:

Dr. Bonny Specker, degree in epidemiology provided a Power Point presentation. Discussed 1918 Spanish flu comparison and statistics. The 1918 event started in the spring in Ft. Riley, Kansas, flattened during the summer and came back even stronger in the fall. One-third of the world was infected. There were 50 million deaths with 675,000 deaths in America. People didn't understand the flu and how it spread, so they did not socially distance. Why were so many affected in 1918? There was no vaccine, no immunity, no isolation/quarantine, poor hygiene, no limit on gatherings.

We are in much the same situation today with COVID-19. No vaccine and no immunity. We are better prepared with understanding the benefits of isolation/quarantine, good hygiene and social distancing. We need to slow the spread; flatten with social distancing

QUESTIONS FOR DR. SPECKER:

Leon: Communities have adopted ordinances, should those measures continue? Dr. Specker: Absolutely do not open up. The worst is yet to come. We need to be on the decline before considering opening up and even then, phase it out over time. New studies are showing over 40 percent of positive people have no symptoms. We are not testing in South Dakota unless you have a severe case so we don't know the extent.

Mingo: How would you recommend opening up when the decline begins? Dr. Specker: Would gradually open in phases after the decline begins and even then, be ready to reinstate ordinances very quickly if the trend goes back up again.

Milroy: Does Dr. Specker have recommended phases? Specker: Discussed examples, maybe restaurants open, when the time is right, in a limited manner with tables spread out.

Milroy: What about hair salons? Dr. Specker: They should remain closed because they have very close contact with clients. One asymptomatic customer could give it to the hair dresser then the hair dresser could give it to many people over a couple of days.

Mayor Johnson: How do we counteract the trend of opening on the coasts and people getting excited to open here? Dr. Specker: We need to keep telling people we have not peaked yet. It would be nice if our projections ended up being an over estimate. A great outcome would be for excellent social distancing to greatly reduce the curve.

Mayor Johnson discussed different people having different expectations. Some are saying let it run its course because that will be best for economy. Some are trying to find middle ground and some are saying that we should keep doing what we are doing.

Dr. Specker stated that letting it run its course would create a situation where health care would be overwhelmed. Those that say that, would they be willing to say that if they get sick, they wouldn't go to the hospital? And wouldn't use a ventilator? Maybe a compromise is to loosen up on non-vulnerable populations. We need to continue to make social distancing a priority.

The Board discussed a possible recommendation. Milroy stated we need to be cautious about letting off the restrictions. Looking at projections, we should extend them one or two more weeks. Maybe the City should have a first reading of an ordinance to have if ready if need be. Mayor Johnson discussed that from a public health perspective, the ordinance should be extended. Mingo said the most powerful comment from Dr. Specker was when she discussed a response to those that are saying let it run its course. She said people that feel that way should be asked if they are willing to say they won't use a hospital bed or ventilator if we open up?

Bies encouraged people to use the access to guidelines for opening. They are readily available. Milroy also commented on the Governor's roadmap for reopening. Foote agreed we should remain cautious.

Den Herder agrees that after having heard from the epidemiologist, the Health Board's recommendation should be to continue restrictions, but we all understand the pressures to open. Leon suggested watching the data and making a recommendation on Monday. Milroy agrees with watching data until Monday and making a recommendation then.

Mayor Johnson noted that we have had two experts present to us and both have stated that the worst is yet to come.

Motion to adjourn by Johnson, seconded by Milroy. All voted aye.