

City Health Board Meeting Discussion Record February 17, 2021

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

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.

Leon called the meeting to order and introduced the board members for the benefit of the viewing public. She then stated the purpose of this meeting is to discuss the current mask ordinance that is set to expire the beginning of March, and the proposed ordinance that would replace it with a sunset date at the end of May.

The City Commission requested the Health Board meet on a regular basis to also create a set of metrics that could help determine a course of action related to the ordinance. Leon explained that staff has reviewed an extensive amount of information and statistics, consulted with local health care providers and been in contact with other communities. The results of the discovery process led to the development of an easily understood set of three metrics that could be used to help make decisions. The three metrics could be reviewed on a weekly basis would include Yankton County vaccination rates, number of active cases and hospitalizations at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital. Each metric would have a threshold to consider.

Another directive provided to the Health Board was to determine what other communities are doing. The results of a survey of like communities in the region was discussed. There were no communities with a mask ordinance extending beyond mid-April and a majority of communities either never had an ordinance or their ordinance has already expired. Leon continued that the discovery process has resulted in a better understanding that much of the discussion about masking is not data driven.

Dr. Milroy stated that this continues to be a public health crisis and that she is a proponent of masking. She continued to say that it is time to take a new look at the situation and community well-being is also a factor to be considered. Community well-being includes consideration of issues beyond the subject of masking. She referenced comments from experts that now is not the time to drop our guard and stated she is in favor of a strong recommendation that wearing masks is important even if an ordinance is not in place.

Mayor Johnson thanked those that put forth the effort to do the research and create the metrics. He stated that things are changing and they are better right now with respect to positivity rates. He also acknowledged that there is not universal support for adopting an ordinance that would extend masking until May 31st. He stated that he believes that most people are in favor of wearing masks, but many are not in favor of mandates.

Brad Bies agreed with the comments thus far and stated his hope for a greater sense of community and talking together in a respectful and reasonable way.

Jason Foote stated his concurrence with prior comments. He further stated that the public has made their decision about masks and whether it's an ordinance or resolution does not impact people's actions.

Dave Mingo agreed and further commented that the term ordinance seems be causing problems and not really having an impact on people's actions.

Ross Den Herder stated that the current resolution is still in effect and provides good advice to the community. There may be a point in the future that some of the language could be adjusted.

Leon stated that we are still in support of people being vaccinated and are advocating for it including providing registration assistance. People are going to have mixed opinions about the vaccine just as they have the masking issue. She commented those opinions are OK, but what is not OK is for people to stop working together.

Motion by Leon and seconded by Milroy to recommend the City Commission allow the current mask ordinance to expire March 1st and not take action at their scheduled hearing on February 22nd. Voting Aye – Johnson, Milroy and Leon.

Mayor Johnson emphasized that CDC guidelines should be followed and that there may be a time to consider adjusting the resolution.

All discussed waiting until after the City Commission has made a decision on the ordinance prior to discussion a resolution. It would be confusing to have multiple ordinance and resolution discussions about the same topic occurring at the same time.

The Health Board also agreed that the proposed resolution developed by Commissioner Maibaum should also wait until after the Commission has completed their discussion about an ordinance.

Motion by Johnson and seconded by Milroy to adjourn the meeting. Voting aye - Johnson, Milroy and Leon. Motion passes.