The following are summary minutes for the meeting of the City of Las Cruces – Health Policy Review Committee/COVID 19 Vaccine Task Force for March 3, 2021 at 3:00 p.m., via Zoom.

Members Present:
Yvonne Flores, City Councillor, District 6
Kasandra Gandara, City Councillor, District 1
Tessa Abeyta-Stuve, City Councillor, District 2

Others Present:
Ikani Taumoepeau, City of Las Cruces
Eric Enriquez, Administration
Phil Catanach, Parks & Recreation
Sonya L. Delgado, Parks and Recreation
Dr. Bernie Mccann, Human Resources
Nina Nunez, Burrell College
Jeff Harris, Burrell College
Dawn Sanchez, Department of Health
Amanda Lopez Akin, Dona Ana County
Lynn Gallagher, Quality of Life
Manny Sanchez, Dona Ana County
Shannon Duffy, Mountainview Regional
Anabela Esteves
Audrey Barela, Parks & Recreation
Caryn Iverson, Memorial Medical Center
Fernando Macias, Dona Ana County
Jason Smith, Las Cruces Fire
Joe Richards, City of Las Cruces
Judy Cota
Karla Watson, City of Las Cruces
Lauren Goldstein, NMSU
Lenny Martinez, NMSU
Louise Tracey Hosa
Mandy Leatherwood Guss, City of Las Cruces
Rabbi Larry Karol
Scott Rodgers, City of Las Cruces
Stephen Lopez, Dona Ana County
Zar Kotlarsic
Amanda Bowen
Debra Temple, Three Crosses Hospital

I. **Call to order:** Councilor Abeyta-Stuve

This meeting was called to order at 3:01 p.m. by Councilor Abeyta-Stuve.

II. **Conflict of Interest**

Councilor Abeyta-Stuve asked Councilors who are voting members to indicate if there is any conflict of interest. Councilor Gandara stated none. Councilor Flores stated none. Councilor Abeyta-Stuve stated her husband works with Memorial Medical Center and works directly with vaccines/vaccinations.

III. **Acceptance of Agenda**

Councilor Abeyta-Stuve asked for a motion to approve the Agenda. Seconded by Councilor Gandara.

None opposed. All in favor. Motion carried.

IV. **Approval of Minutes**

Councilor Abeyta-Stuve asked for a motion to approve the Minutes from meeting held on February 17, 2021. Moved by Councilor Gandara. Seconded by Councilor Abeyta-Stuve.

None opposed. All in Favor. Motion Carried.

V. **Action Items**

**Equitable Distribution Letter to State Officials**

Councilor Stuve state a letter that has appeared before City Council is a letter to State officials asking the state for equitable distribution of vaccinations and showcasing the strengths of the Task Force and letting state officials know we are ready and able to handle as many vaccines as possible.

Councilor Gandara motioned to delay the Equitable Distribution letter being to sent to state officials until DOH and OEM updates. Seconded by Councilor Abeyta-Stuve.

None opposed. All in Favor. Motion Carried.
VI. Discussion Items

Department of Health-Dawn Sanchez

Ms. Dawn Sanchez updated the group with slides to review. Currently, the county has gone back into red from recently being yellow. We still do have a high case rate per 100,000. Our positivity rate is up to 6.7. Covid safe practices need to be followed along with testing. Still concerned with case rates in the County.

The New Mexico Vaccine Equity plan is something new and is putting a focus on equitable distribution of the Covid 19 vaccine to decrease morbidity and mortality from Covid 19 and preserve societal functioning. Our county has been identified as an area to focus on getting more vaccine out to the populace area in the County. The state is using the CDC’s social vulnerability index and the covid rates to allocate at least 25% equity of reserve of the vaccine. For Dona Ana County we are a little over .8 for the socially vulnerable index. They are also working to prioritize 50 new providers in underserved communities and includes dona ana with more vaccine being available. Mobile vaccination teams are being looked at with the National Guard potentially in the Hatch area. It can be smaller events but we would need to go to them to get these vaccinations knocked out. Johnson & Johnson vaccine has now arrived in the state. Our base line based on our population is about 10K a week for vaccination allocations. We received 12,800 doses for Pfizer and Moderna and 3,900 of Johnson & Johnson with a total of 16,700 which is a huge increase.

Currently still have about 47,000 individuals waiting for an appointment. Working very closely with senior populations to help get them registered. There is a lot of focus there. One thing that is being required is that each covid 19 vaccine provider is required to give each patient a vaccine record.

Commissioner Sanchez stated that some numbers he pulled are different from what Ms. Sanchez showed. He is concerned that the numbers say that we are number 10 in terms of counties of people registered here in the state but remain 28, 29 depending on numbers you look at of getting vaccines. He asked where do the numbers come from as they are not in sync with the DOH website and what is driving the difference? Do you see how to continue for a larger share going forward? Ms. Sanchez stated her numbers are back from the 28th and not updated as of today as the ones on the DOH website.

Mr. Stephen Lopez stated he believes the difference in Ms. Sanchez’s numbers are ones of people still waiting to be registered and the state website are those
who have registered and those who have already been vaccinated. Ms. Sanchez stated that was correct.

Councilor Gandara asked about the positivity rate being higher and is there a reason why. Ms. Lopez stated the positivity rate just means there is prevalence of vaccine in the community. Mr. Lopez added that the positivity rate is calculated by taking the total number of non-duplicated tests, positive and negative, that is the denominator and dividing that into the number of positive cases. What you are seeing is a drop in testing. In the past, it was around 1500 tests per day in the County we are now below 750 tests per day.

Ms. Iverson responded to the information Mr. Lopez gave on data collection. If you have one person that comes in to test and they are positive you are at 100%, so the way data is collected is skewed. It is not relevant to anything, if you want to do it by 100,000 per population or 1000 per population, having people tested without signs and symptoms is ridiculous. The people coming in to tested in our community truly have signs and symptoms and thats why the positivity rate goes up because it matches. Either change the way data is collected or we will always be in the red.

Councilor Flores stated that she agrees with Mr. Lopez that more people that test the more we will have a better representation. There should be adjustments made in the representing he true positivity. Councilor Flores then asked Ms. Leatherwood Guss if there is way to get the word out emphasizing that individuals get tested. Ms. Leatherwood Guss stated yes that can be done and the OEM sent over information a week ago and that has been put out on social media.

Mr. Martinez stated that a campaign has been started for communicating the need for testing with the Chamber of Commerce and other economic development within the County.

Ms. Nunez stated that Mr. Lopez made a good comment about how in our testing endeavor we have a biased self-selecting process. It is interesting that there is talk on “let’s game the system” when that is something we really don’t want to do. We do have a letter to increase vaccinations, but would it be worthwhile to say we really need to re-evaluate the metric and gating criteria she has listed because it really is not what’s going on in our community.

Councilor Gandara stated that she would like everyone to be descriptive on what the gating criteria should be and have a better understanding.

Ms. Nunez stated she thinks we do need to re-evaluate our testing method.
Mr. Harris stated that he thinks the correct way to approach this is to ask the state on to justify why this is the gating criteria. It is the time to re-ask the question on what the gating criteria should be and ask the people who really understand what the data is to weigh in on that.

Office of Emergency Management-Stephen Lopez

Mr. Stephen Lopez stated that wanted to give a report on action that needs to be taken. He wanted to state that the 16000 doses that came into the County this week is not controlled by the Department of Health. Only a percentage of that is. Dona ana county is different from the rest of the state. Our public health efforts, DOH, OEM, County efforts, City Efforts has done more than the rest of the state has. We have driven over 37 percent of the vaccines given our county the rest of the state is only 17.5 percent. The rest of the state it is private provider such as hospital clinics that have obtained vaccine have been pushing it out. As we talked about a FEMA grant but with the announcement from Texas we cannot wait the month to get a reply from FEMA. I have I would like to encourage anyone that can have an influence say let’s put the FEMA grant aside lets fund this with the city and county and get the effort done now and file for FEMA reimbursement later. We need to enable providers and assist as necessary, encourage private providers to expand operations, address fiscal disincentives, hire some temporary or contract personnel.

Councilor Abeyta-Stuve stated that the Las Cruces Fire department asked to become a registered provider but it is still pending and a reason why she would like the vaccine letter to be sent.

Assistant Manager Enriquez stated the application is still pending for the Fire department to become a provider and the City Manager has put in a call to the Governor’s office to see how to get that expedited.

Ms. Sanchez stated that she is aware of the application and can help advocate to get the application approved.

Councilor Gandara stated she would like to know if the OEM’s office has a total of what funding might be needed from the City and what it would be for? Mr. Sanchez responded that it would be around 938,000 for a two-month intensive push to cover all Dona Ana County based on estimates.
Las Cruces Fire Department-Jason Smith

Mr. Smith stated they are continuing to assign six to eight people the convention center pod site. It seems to be well run but there are some internal concerns from the fire side. The Friday we will start the homebound program in scheduling citizens for homebound vaccinations. Looking at stepping ps efforts and pursuing the FEMA Grant and requesting to use other city funding to increase the homebound efforts and also assistance with vaccination POD sites.

Quality of Life-Scott Rodgers

Mr. Rodgers stated registration events have started with 20 staff and volunteers at 7 different locations throughout las cruces. A table and internet device was set up where we disseminate information such as pamphlets that instruct residents on how to register online. We also provide assistance on helping registering individuals. So far, 220 residents have been given information and 67 have been registered. The plan is to continue for the next 6 weeks.

Resource Survey Listing Results

Councilor Abeyta-Stuve stated that the results are still being worked on. She asked if you are an organizational leader please fill out the survey and we will have more detailed results to go over later. She asked Mr. Catanach if there was anything he wanted to add. Mr. Catanach stated there was only 6 surveys received so that was not enough to give a clear snapshot of what the survey would in tale so he would like to encourage everyone to take time to get the survey back to us.

Councilor Abeyta-Stuve asked if organizational leaders would like to give an update, they are free to do so.

Ms. Iverson stated that Memorial Medical center has given over 15,000 vaccines. 1000 doses of Johnson and Johnson have been received and will be given out Monday. Doses are given Monday through Thursday and 300 a day.

Mr. Clarke stated that Mountainview is using the portal and making sure to stay within phases. Only doing the group that is approved through the portal. They will be doing vaccines Tuesdays and Thursdays goal at 1000 a week. A benefit would be help with traffic control to have the ability to do more vaccines. Mountainview has not been able to obtain any of the Johnson & Johnson vaccines. Mountainview has given out a total of 5000 vaccinations.
Ms. Temple stated that Three crosses Hospital has only given 303 vaccinations to date. With those being staff and some first responders. They have not had any additional allocations. Being in the start up phase trying to be a little bit conservative.

Ms. Nunez stated that Burrell has had a consistent stream of their students volunteering in the effort and they are very eager. Around 150 student physicians that have gone through training and about 75 out in the field.

Ms. Esteves stated she is a second-year student at Burrell but also the NM State coordinator for the national student response network and hoping to help out with vaccine hesitancy. Looking for any nonprofits to reach out to see if they are willing to help with tool kits etc. for vaccine hesitancy.

Ms. Kotlarsic stated that social media tool kits that have information from the CDC and information is updated and if there is any organization that is interested in getting these tools kits they are willing to help out. Tool kits can be tagged with individual logos.

Mr. Martinez asked if the tool kits were in Spanish and English. Ms. Kotlarsic stated they can be developed in different languages.

VII. Action Items

Tabled Equitable Distribution Letter to State Officials

Councilor Abeyta-Stuve asked for a motion to approve to send the equitable distribution letter to State Officials.

Moved by Councilor Flores. Seconded by Councilor Abeyta-Flores.

None opposed. All in favor. Motion carried.

VIII. Human Resources Presentation (Available Leaves)

Ms. Richards along with Dr. Mccann presented a PowerPoint which included all leave type (attached).

Councilor Abeyta-Stuve asked about the leave cost that was initially stated versus the current amount and what the change was in formula.

Ms. Richards stated that was her error, she stated the incorrect amount.

Councilor Abeyta-Stuve asked Dr. Mccann that his recommendation would be to implement training and if he has an estimate of cost for programming and how he feels that would increase users for that sort of programming.
Mr. Mccann stated that has not been explored but it seems in his experience that a City-wide effort will reach more people and their families rather than offering a single day to certain employees who may take advantage of it.

Councilor Flores asked if the information on what is offered for individuals is disseminated on a regular basis. Dr. Mccann stated that EAP had a performance measure pre COVID, that the EAP would go out to every department at least once a year.

Councilor Abeyta-Stuve asked Ms. Richards if she would send the cost breakdown when possible.

IX. Next Meeting Date
March 17, 2021 3:30 p.m. (COVID 19 Vaccine Task Force)
April 7, 2021 3:00 p.m. (Health PRC/COVID 19 Vaccine Task Force)

X. Adjournment: 5:31 p.m.

Chair

Approved: March 31, 2021