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The following are summary minutes for the meeting of the **City of Las Cruces – COVID-19 Task Force Committee** on September 15, 2021. At 3:30 p.m. at City Hall, 700 S. Main Street, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Members Present:

- Tessa Abeyta-Stuve, City Councilor, District 2
- Kasandra Gandara, City Councilor, District 1
- Yvonne Flores, City Councilor, District 6
- Adrian Larson, MountainView, Member

Members Absent:

Others Present:

- Sonya Delgado, Parks and Rec
- David Sedillo, Public Works
- Audrey Barela, Parks and Rec
- David Weir, Community Development
- Eric Enriquez, City Manager
- Jason Smith, Fire Department
- Pattie Hartman
- Mahesh Sita
- Mandy Leatherwood Guss, Communications Director
- Becky Baum, Recording Secretary, RC Creations, LLC

- I. Call to Order:** Chair Abeyta-Stuve called the meeting to order.
- II. Conflict of Interest:** There was no conflict of interest.
- III. Acceptance of the Agenda:** Board Member Flores motioned, Board Member seconded Gandara. The agenda was accepted.
- IV. Approval of the Minutes - August 18, 2021:** Board Member Gandara motioned, Chair Abeyta-Stuve seconded. The minutes were approved; Board Member Flores abstained.
- V. Discussion Items:**
 - 1. Department of Health - Dawn Sanchez:** Vaccine number rates were shown for New Mexico; continual increase. 78.9% of all New Mexicans aged 18 and over have received at least the first dose. 62.4% of ages 12 through 17 have also received their first dose. 69.1% of ages 18 and over as well as 51.4% of

1 ages 12 through 17 are fully vaccinated. There are 10 counties less than 50%
2 vaccinated statewide.

3
4 Doña Ana County is up to 82.3% of ages 18 and over having the first dose with
5 73.5% fully vaccinated. There are two counties in the southwest region which
6 are below 50%: Catron and Otero. Statewide the case rate is decreasing, the
7 spread rate is trending down, infections are mainly amongst unvaccinated
8 individuals, the Indoor Mask Mandate has been extended to October 15th, the
9 test positivity rate is at 6.5% which is below targeted 7.5%, and Doña Ana
10 County cases per 100,000 is 28.5 with a positivity rate of 6.54%.

11
12 As a follow up to the previous meetings questions, the federal VA data was
13 captured along with non-federal doses for New Mexico from Texas; not with
14 Arizona. The state data can be broken down by age and ethnicity but the
15 federal data does not have ethnicity data. Ms. Sanchez can make a request
16 specifically for Doña Ana County. The breakthrough cases are being tracked
17 by ERD but not available for release to the public.

18
19 There was discussion on the booster dose; still waiting on final decision. The
20 booster shot is to help waning immunity; there is question to that as immunity
21 is high. There will be an FDA Committee meeting Friday September 17th. It
22 is anticipated that the ACIP to discuss on September 29th with guidance to
23 come out after that fact. The September 20th expected date will be pushed
24 back. DOH has been preparing for mass vaccinations; currently the
25 immunocompromised is eligible for a third dose because their immune system
26 didn't kick in as high as it should.

27
28 Graphs on possible booster need was shown. A survey of roughly 10,000
29 people statewide was done; 65% responded with 91% out of the respondents
30 stated they want the third booster. Ms. Sanchez explained the graph. DOH is
31 currently looking for potential vaccine sites. There was discussion on the
32 FEMA and National Guard teams; the FEMA team has not been extended and
33 will end on September 30th. There may be another contractor coming in that
34 can provide vaccine and testing so they wish to have a hub site in Las Cruces;
35 the Convention Center would be the best option for location and capacity.

36
37 The Farm and Ranch Museum has offered to host them and can do roughly
38 500 vaccinations a day as well as utilize the County Administration Building on
39 Motel beginning in November which can also do roughly 500 vaccinations a
40 day. The Health office on Solano can handle roughly 200 people. MOA's are
41 in the works. Ms. Sanchez would like to request the Convention Center for
42 any amount of time. DOH is also in communication with NMSU to do a drive
43 through site as well.

44
45 Flu season is coming up and the flu vaccine is out; both vaccines can be
46 received at the same time. There was a lot of children receiving the COVID

1 vaccine prior to the school year. The registration apps are being updated to
2 add the flu to the COVID registration. They are pushing people to go to their
3 provider for the vaccines. There are roughly 600 providers in the state with
4 roughly 400 ordering vaccines. The schools have the ability to have a
5 contractor come in to do testing surveillance on site, a CDC federal grant. The
6 three pieces include a contractor do testing there, a funding to create a COVID
7 team for the schools, and upgrade the IT systems; both LCPS and Gadsden
8 schools are interested. The link is newmexicoschoolscovidtesting.com.

9
10 If anyone misplaces their vaccine card they can go to www.vaxviewnm.org; it
11 will show all vaccines. Ms. Sanchez reminded everyone to get tested for
12 COVID if they have any symptoms, were in close contact with someone who
13 has it, are unvaccinated and live or work in a high-risk setting, or are scheduled
14 for a surgery or hospital stay. The contact tracing staffing has been increased
15 to contact more people in order to mitigate more spread.

16
17 Places to get tested were shown throughout the state. An at home test can be
18 received through vaulthealth.com/nm. Curative has expanded in Las Cruces
19 and are providing testing at the Solano office Tuesday's and Friday's from 8:00
20 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., LCPS Admin building on Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00
21 p.m., and at the County building on Monday's from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. They
22 are still at the DACC campus Monday through Saturday from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00
23 p.m. as well as the City of Sunland Park Monday through Friday. Pathology
24 Consultants are also available for testing.

25
26 The virus is changing again. The Delta variant spreads rapidly. If you have
27 COVID you can learn if you're eligible for the monoclonal antibody treatment.
28 Carla with Community Engagement Office for Las Cruces asked if they have
29 heard anything regarding vaccine for children aged five through 12 and if the
30 state has an update regarding the new variant. Ms. Sanchez stated that Pfizer
31 was going to push for EUA approval in September but it was moved back;
32 should happen sometime in the fall but unsure when. There have been many
33 younger children getting tested.

34
35 The current variant is the Delta and is the biggest concern. Carla added that
36 they have receive some questions from the community regarding the new
37 specific variant. The state lab is keeping track of variants but the Delta variant
38 is the most prominent. Ms. Sanchez can connect her with SLD if she has more
39 specific needs.

- 40
41 **2. Office of Emergency Management - Stephen Lopez:** The infection rates
42 using a seven day average have generally stabilized over the last month;
43 peaks began at the end of July and return to school. There was a dip and then
44 went back up most likely due to Labor Day. There will most likely be a generally
45 increasing trend for a week or so and then hopefully back down. The primary
46 driver is unvaccinated cases. The number one reason for hesitant people to

1 become vaccinated is family, friends, and trusted co-workers encouraging
2 them.

3
4 Mr. Lopez expects to see the spike in cases every time there is group activities,
5 Halloween, Christmas, New Year's, etcetera. The main group for driving
6 infections tend to be 20 to 29 year olds which also aren't as vaccinated. The
7 Doña Ana resident deaths due to COVID are also getting younger. The
8 vaccinations are becoming less than 1,000 a week which is not great. Mr.
9 Lopez repeated the percentages of those vaccinated. Compared to the entire
10 population, children included, the percentage is 55.5% fully vaccinated and
11 62.2% with one dose; some will change once those aged five to 12 are eligible.

12
13 Pfizer booster is approved by the FDA for immunocompromised. There are
14 people going to El Paso for booster doses who are not immunocompromised.
15 Most of the vaccinations are public health effort driven; La Clinica, Ben Archer,
16 the pharmacies, and etcetera. Pfizer hopes to have the younger aged vaccine
17 out before Halloween and Dr. Fauci believes late October. There may still be
18 some issues regarding vaccine of children; some waiting for full approval.
19 Based on information the CDC collects Doña Ana County is doing well.
20 Hospital admissions are around four or five a day for COVID. Total beds in
21 use is less than 11% and percentage of ICU beds is just under one third. This
22 is not a reflection of the county as it is a hub; also one hospital could be taking
23 more than other.

24
25 The Unified Area Command is no longer in place but can be reactivated if
26 entities believe there is a need. If an agency is being overwhelmed they can
27 contact OEM who will then help. You can also add your name to the OEM list
28 if you wish to receive more updates. OEM currently has a morgue trailer in
29 case hospitals and funeral homes become overwhelmed; currently it is empty.
30 Mandy Gus asked about the difference between the percentages of fully
31 vaccinated versus one shot; whether people are showing up for the second
32 shot or the waiting period is that long. It is a little bit of both; those forgetting
33 the second shot and those waiting for the time period. There was discussion
34 on how to stop the indefinite wait on the second shot.

35
36 There was discussion on how long was too long between shots; there isn't any
37 length of time too long. There was discussion on the Johnson & Johnson as
38 it's only one shot; they are factored into the fully vaccinated. There was
39 discussion on whether they can find how many of people with only one shot
40 have waited too long; target them to receive their second shot. If someone
41 received their first dose from the DOH but received their second dose from
42 another source the data could be wrong in the portal.

- 43
44 **3. Area Hospitals Update:** Dr. Caryn Iverson stated that they believed there
45 would be an issue of morgue storage going into the colder months. She is
46 grateful there is now a morgue truck. The current cases are typically the

1 unvaccinated population; the ones not surviving are also unvaccinated. When
2 they are admitted to the hospital they are asked if they have received the
3 vaccine; if they haven't and want it then the first dose is administered as well
4 as resources in the community to receive the second dose. However, there's
5 not a lot of people who wish to receive it.
6

7 Steven asked about the mandatory vaccines for hospital workers and whether
8 it is impacting the hospitals. Dr. Iverson stated that because of the caveat
9 exemption whether medical or religious it has helped with the situation. There
10 are close to 1,500 employees with only 20 that it is impacting. Chair Abeyta-
11 Stuve asked about the education with patients on vaccination and what the
12 common reasons are for declining. Dr. Iverson stated that the biggest reason
13 is the patient doesn't trust the CDC or vaccine and are adamant for not taking
14 it. There was discussion of issues with other medical care with COVID; they
15 are referred to other resources if they have additional medical issues. There
16 was discussion on the monoclonal antibody treatment; MMC is offering it and
17 there has been an increase in requests.
18

19 **4. City of Las Cruces Staff Update:** Eric Enriquez stated that he will look into
20 the scheduling for the Las Cruces Convention Center to be used for
21 vaccinations. Land management is still looking into places in Las Cruces;
22 possibly the old Sears in the mall which should be available sometime in
23 November as well as the old Kmart on Del Rey. There was discussion on the
24 limitations of using the Convention Center and what issues there are; was told
25 it was booked up for the rest of the year but Mr. Enriquez will look at the
26 scheduling to see what can be done. Chair Abeyta-Stuve advises something
27 be in place prior to November and December for the booster shots.
28

29 **5. Community Messaging:** Mandy Gus stated that after the last meeting
30 updated COVID PSA's were created to focus specifically on vaccinations and
31 addressing the myths. The new script will be running beginning next week. In
32 the meantime the vaccine focused ads developed with the Office of Emergency
33 Management Grant are being re-run, targets younger audience. Ms. Gus
34 added that they have been in touch with both LCPS and NMSU to work with
35 sharing information and working together.
36

37 **6. Discussion:** John Webster who works for the Chancellor Office at NMSU; he
38 is the COVID-19 Project Manager. NMSU is running new statistics based on
39 Doña Ana County's population. The new NMSU and Doña Ana Community
40 College census data shows 25,085 individuals of students and employees;
41 makes up 11.4% of the county. The positivity rate based on population alone
42 is at 0.14% but compared to the 403 reported last week for the county they are
43 at 8.93% of the county. Mr. Webster stated they are watching the numbers to
44 make sure they are not more than the 11% of the county's positivity rate.
45

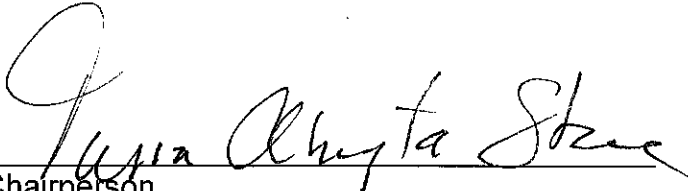
1 There was discussion of watching the vaccination rate; haven't had much
2 success. On September 30th the vaccination and testing mandate at NMSU
3 takes effect. This morning they launched vxtrack.nmsu.edu to upload
4 vaccination proof. They anticipate by mid-October they will have a much better
5 idea of who is vaccinated. If the individual wishes to do the testing then the
6 results must be provided by midnight on October 7th; it is a condition of
7 employment. There was discussion of code of conduct for the students; all
8 students must be tested. If a student is 100% remote they do not need to
9 partake in the mandate.

10
11 **7. Next Steps:** Dawn Sanchez stated they hope to have the vaccine site ready
12 to go in October. She believes that encouraging the vaccinations and get
13 providers to become providers of the vaccine will do more. Testing still needs
14 to be maintained as well. Chair Abeyta-Stuve commented that if there are any
15 issues to arise they can contact her, Mr. Enriquez, Dawn, or Steven.

16
17 **VI. Future Discussion/Task Listing:**

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19 **VII. Next Meeting Date - October 20, 2021:**

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21 **VIII. Adjournment:**

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Chairperson