

**Regular Meeting #54 - 2020
Fairfield County Commissioners' Office
November 14, 2020**

Meeting with Governor Mike DeWine

The Commissioners met at 11:57 a.m. for a meeting with Governor Mike DeWine. Governor DeWine welcomed everyone to the meeting, and Commissioner Davis indicated the Fairfield County Commission was in session. Commissioners present: Steve Davis, Jeff Fix, and Dave Levacy. Also present were Carri Brown, Rachel Elsea, Jon Kochis, and Chief Lape. Attending virtually were Governor Mike DeWine, Lt. Governor Husted, Larry Hanna, Kathleen Young-Riley, Steve Rauch, Stephanie Fyffe, Angela Krile, Travis Markwood, Mayor Dave Scheffler, David Uhl, Jan Allen, Jack Janoso, and Senator Tim Schaffer.

Governor DeWine congratulated Fairfield County on its efforts to communicate with the residents of Fairfield County. He stated the purpose of the meeting was to see what else is needed from the Governor and Lt. Governor. He shared what is being seen statewide. The virus is moving faster than they ever thought it would. Hospital bed occupancy has jumped over 2,000 beds in the last month. The positivity rate went from 2.5% six weeks ago to 12-14% and is increasing every day. Hospital admissions are lagging indicators of daily testing numbers. The numbers are not sustainable, and they have not seen a plateau. Without doing anything, the state will start shutting down on its own.

Governor DeWine reviewed Fairfield County's numbers and said they were typical comparing the last few weeks of August with today's numbers.

Mr. Hanna reviewed the numbers that Fairfield County is seeing, averaging 100 cases a day with 150 cases seen today. He reviewed staffing levels and tasks. Due to the high daily numbers, they recently reached out to the Ohio Department of Health to see how they can prioritize things. He reviewed the change in plans, including a shorter intake form and by-proxy contract tracing. They are trying to schedule another COVID testing site for early December, but they are worried about staffing. School quarantine levels are at a high with over 300 students currently quarantined.

Governor DeWine asked if they were set to have the National Guard come in.

Mr. Hanna replied that he believed they were set.

Governor DeWine asked if they were using some of the state's contact tracers.

Ms. Fyffe replied they have used a few of the state's contact tracers who take cases as they can.

Governor DeWine thanked the Health Department for their work. He stated the \$200,000 resource would be coming soon to the Health Department.

Governor DeWine asked Mr. Kochis for an update.

Mr. Kochis reported they are ramping up for more PPE deliveries. They do one distribution per week or two deliveries per week. They are at the lowest inventory they have ever had.

EMA has used advanced distribution methods to over 110 partner sites. School PPE has been very helpful with the ESC. They anticipate doing this for the next several months. They also believe they have a solid plan for vaccine distribution.

Mr. Janoso reported on FMC's current numbers. FMC has seen the same percentage increase as reported by the Department of Health. A 5% positivity has increased to 20-30%. They noticed this trend really kicking in last week and knew they needed to reexamine their efforts. They have redone the surge plans three times this week and feel comfortable with them.

Governor DeWine asked what the Commissioners were seeing.

Commissioner Davis reported the Commission had a very similar meeting (like this one) on Monday meeting after speaking with Mr. Janoso regarding FMC's numbers. On Tuesday morning, the Commission authorized a very aggressive communications campaign, of which billboards have already been posted. He stated the most concerning issue as they initiate a large

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communication campaign is that the Governor's plan may get ahead of the County's plan. He believes they will see an improvement in their situation in the next two weeks, not within the next four days. He respectfully asked for more time to see if they might have a fighting chance without a shut down.

Governor DeWine reported they were working this weekend to see what they can do. The goal is not to shut things down. They issued a new order for better compliance for those shopping in retail and working there. He noted there were some counties were only 10% wore masks. They also need deal with the crazy issue of weddings that have become so deadly, the receptions, not the ceremonies themselves. He believes if they do not slow this down some, the virus will run off the tracks and people will be scared to death to do anything come early December. This is not healthy for business or anything. If nothing changes, the reports from the hospitals will be much worse in two to three weeks.

Mr. Davis thanked Governor DeWine for the time and courtesy.

Mr. Fix commented on his appreciation to the Governor and Lt. Governor for their leadership. He also commented on the approaching wedding of his daughter and jokingly stated it would be helpful to have even more guidance for receptions.

Governor DeWine stated they are encouraging a one-year celebration as they hope to have enough people immunized a year from now.

Mr. Levacy thanked Governor DeWine and Lt. Governor Husted for their leadership. He stated he thinks the best option for communications is from the bottom up. He asked the state to encourage other counties join in on the effort with a common message.

Governor DeWine stated Fairfield County was doing a great job and was thankful for their work. He asked Lt. Governor Husted to take over the call.

Lt. Governor Husted stated they do these calls to try to get counties to do what Fairfield County is doing.

Lt. Governor Husted asked if attitudes were changing about safeguarding measures or if there was something else the group would like to discuss.

Mayor Scheffler stated he noticed outstanding compliance with masks everywhere in Fairfield County. He stated it was rare to see someone without a mask when they should have one on. He thinks in the city of Lancaster compliance is high.

Mr. Davis reported the county has tackled multiple large issues in the past ten years, and county leadership is "all in" on this one. He hopes they have a little bit of time to see the fruits of the efforts before events take them over.

Lt. Governor appreciated the comments and understood the issue of time. He stated everyone was in a tough spot as the virus has spread so much over the past few weeks. They do not want so much momentum that it overwhelms the health care system. The question is: How much time do we have? And what is the best approach? Neither the Governor nor Lt. Governor ran on closing businesses, rather they ran on opening more businesses.

Mr. Levacy stated one of the biggest issues was mixed messages about masks. This is adding to the confusion. He stated the need to advocate on the science of wearing masks. He used the example of national leaders stating masks were not necessary, such as the CDC stating early during the pandemic that they were not necessary. He thinks the approach of bottom up is the most effective. If the leaders are all on the same page, it will be very effective.

Mr. Fix stated the things he has seen and heard that strike home are the anecdotal stories of those who have been sick. Such stories can be very moving, and he suggested the state gather as many of these stories and experiences to share as possible.

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Dr. Brown stated the internal and external stakeholders tend to listen to people trust. While the celebrities help, many local leaders and everyday citizens are missing from that message. In Fairfield County, the plan is to localize the message and have it come from trusted people (or roles, with many roles represented) as much as possible. The desire is to increase relevance for the person receiving the message, too.

Mr. Janoso echoed the need for a grassroots approach. If people do not see it in their own lives, they do not think it is real. He sees the impact in their care providers who are happy to provide care, but they are tired as they see patient after patient who did not think they could get the virus and did. The important message is that the surge is happening in Fairfield County now.

Dr. Brown proposed the creation of a repository of local practices to help share ideas, involving the association and the state. Sometimes reading about other plans can inspire new ideas.

Ms. Allen asked if they could share Fairfield County's plan with others.

Dr. Brown reported they could.

Lt. Governor Husted suggested sharing it through CCAO as well.

Mr. Fix stated he believed the association had shared the plan. He also thought that some state financial support for communication plans could be helpful to counties who are lacking financial resources.

Mr. Levacy stated it was one thing to have a plan, but it is also important to implement it quickly.

Lt. Governor Husted referenced OSU's campaign on why people wear a mask. He suggested adding it to Fairfield County's campaign as to why each person wears a mask.

Ms. Krile reported that is exactly the campaign they are planning to do with the entire community.

Pastor Rauch expressed his concerns of the mental and emotional health aspects of the pandemic.

Lt. Governor Husted replied that there was no doubt that was a concern especially with younger individuals not having access to resources as older adults do. He stated he would follow up with some additional information.

Dr. Brown reported that Fairfield County had made many referrals to small businesses for the recently announced state grant opportunity. She asked for a list of the businesses who were awarded grants to see how effective the referrals were.

Lt. Gov. replied more than 50 businesses applied so Fairfield County would get all their allocation and then some. He will follow up with the specific information.

Lt. Gov. also commented on the BWC refund checks which should come in the next few weeks. The timing of the refunds should be helpful.

Mr. Levacy stated if any counties would like help, Fairfield County is here to help as well.

Lt. Governor Husted thanked everyone for their time. The next few weeks will probably be the toughest of the pandemic. They need to get through the next few months, and they will get through it and will be ready to roar once they get through it. This is one of those moments to dig down deep, be tough, be stoic, be optimistic, and be leaders - because people are struggling. Everyone is struggling. Now is the time to show everyone who put leaders in their positions that they made the right decision.

State officials and others departed the (virtual) meeting. Commissioners present: Steve Davis and Dave Levacy. Also present were Carri Brown, Rachel Elsea, Jon Kochis, and Chief Lape.

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Open Items

Mr. Davis stated the crux of the situation was how quickly the county can move before the Governor makes his decisions.

Mr. Levacy stated that he thought the Governor heard the message.

Mr. Kochis replied it would be helpful if they did a shut down it would be regional so that some areas were not hurt if unnecessary to shut down.

Mr. Davis asked what the situation was at the jail.

Chief Lape reported no staff on the jail side were quarantined. No inmates were in quarantine. There are no new cases. Three employees formerly isolated will be returning to work next week.

Dr. Brown stated there needs to be a consistent message from elected officials and all leaders, which includes internal communication within offices. There is also a need to start gathering volunteers for the vaccination clinics.

Mr. Davis is 100% convinced that the virus is more contagious now than it was in the spring.

Mr. Kochis replied it was more contagious as it becomes less lethal.

Chief Lape thought it would be informational to put out information on mask wearing.

Dr. Brown suggested a campaign to also limit gatherings of more than 10 people and putting that message out. There are still people who believe it is safe to be in large groups of people without distancing.

Mr. Davis asked to revisit the approach if the Governor leapfrogs the Commission. Until then he wants Dr. Brown to feel confident of the communication plan up to her legal level of authority and beyond it if necessary. Resolutions can always affirm actions. He wants to slow this down without putting more people out of work and close businesses. If everything is shut down, they can reevaluate.

Mr. Levacy agreed that speed is of the essence.

Adjournment

With no further business, on the motion of Dave Levacy and a second of Steve Davis, the Board of Commissioners voted to adjourn at 1:01 p.m.

Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:

Voting aye thereon: Dave Levacy and Steve Davis

Absent: Jeff Fix

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 17, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

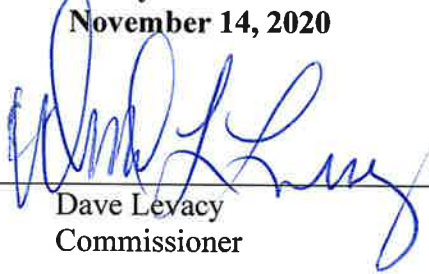
Motion by: _____ Seconded by: _____
that the November 12, 2020 minutes were approved by the following vote:

YEAS: NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: None

*Approved on November 17, 2020

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Steven A. Davis
Commissioner
Dave Levacy
Commissioner
Jeff Fix
Commissioner
Rachel A Elsea, Clerk

