

Dubuque County Board of Health Special Meeting

Minutes of February 11, 2021

Mr. Bechen called the February 11, 2021, Dubuque County Board of Health Special Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call:

Members Present:	Tom Bechen, Diane Pape-Freiburger, Katie Jones, Suzanne Stroud, Adam Hoffman, Hendrik Schultz
Members Absent:	Corey Young, Dr. Bobby Koneru, Dr. Valerie Peckosh
Others Present:	Patrice Lambert, Dubuque County Health Department; Ben Fischer; Ed Raber, Interim Board Executive Director; Wayne Kenniker; Mike Johnson; Nichole Weber; Brian Meyers

Additional Notes: None

1. Roll Call

2. Public Comments

None

3. Discussion and Possible Action on Proposed Mask Mandate Resolution

Tom Bechen provides BOH members with a background of what possible changes can be made the proposed mask mandate resolution. He also adds that changes were made in the resolution to remove points that were no longer applicable, such as Dubuque County being in the red zone. The conversation then opens to a discussion on the proposed end date to the resolution.

Hendrik Schultz begins the conversation by stating that the numbers in the County and State are looking better than they were in November and vaccine is now available. It is still important to consider not everyone is vaccinated yet. We can assume that maybe 40% of Dubuque County is currently vaccinated or has had COVID-19. We have not yet reached herd immunity. He also adds that there are many new variants that are spreading and additional outbreaks could happen in the near future. Hendrik also adds that it is important to consider how far the County is in our vaccination plan. There are about 100,000 people in Dubuque County and about 25% are 65+. However, 80% of people who are infected are below 60 years old. The other 20% make up 93% of COVID-19 deaths in the County. Can we justify to put this group at higher risk? He suggests waiting to end the mask mandate until phase 1B is complete in Dubuque County; that includes everyone who is 65+.

Diane Pape-Freiburger adds that we do not know what future allocations of the vaccine will be, making it hard to create a timeline. Also, as federal partners/pharmacies join the vaccination plan, we may start receiving less vaccine each week. Diane also adds that this is not just an elderly issue, but that many younger people may see life-long medical issues from getting COVID-19. Tom Bechen comments that it may be difficult to pass the proposed resolution without including an end date determined by metrics such as vaccination rate. Diane responds that the BOH and County Health Department are already looking at COVID-19 data every day, and therefore know when it would be appropriate to remove a mask mandate. However, she understands that the public may be more interested in having an end date on paper. Diane suggests an end date of June 15, this being the last day of prek-12 school and also 2 weeks after Memorial Day.

Hendrik Schultz agrees with Diane and adds that 23-30% of people will refuse the COVID-19 vaccine for a variety of reasons. He suggests a two-fold approach to include a timed end date and a data metric, whichever occurs sooner. Hendrik emphasizes that wording is very important in order for the message to be clear and accepted by the community.

Katie Jones adds her support for Diane and Hendrik's points. She also adds that on Monday, schools go back full-time in person and many teachers are getting vaccinated over the next two weeks.

Adam adds that he is in favor of the two-fold approach to include a timed end date as well as a metric of completing phase 1B. Suzie Stroud agrees. She believes this will show that there is data and rationale behind the BOH decision.

The BOH agrees that phase 1B of COVID-19 vaccinations could be completed before June 15, and that would call for re-assessment of the mask mandate on behalf of the BOH.

Katie Jones asks how the BOH and community will be able to tell when phase 1B is completed. Patrice responds that this is something that is being tracked by the Dubuque County Health Department as well as through IRIS. Typically, 50% of vaccine allocations go to 65+ and the other 50% go to priority occupations. She stresses concern that the State could always allow counties to move on to phase 1C before 65+ is complete. Patrice will take this information to the IMT to better determine how this will be tracked.

The BOH members agree to change the wording at the end of the proposed resolution from "shall remain in place until rescinded" to, "The provision of this proclamation shall

continue until the Dubuque County Incident Management Team declares that Phase 1B is completed in Dubuque County, or by June 15 2021, whichever occurs sooner.”

Diane Pape-Freiburger made the motion to approve the amended, proposed mask mandate resolution. Hendrik Schultz seconded the motion. 5 Aye, motion carried.

4. Approval of Notice of Public Hearing – Wednesday February 24, 2021

Samantha Kloft shares her screen to show the notice of public hearing on Wednesday, February 24, 2021 to be published in the papers on Wednesday, February 17, 2021.

Hendrik Schultz made the motion to approve the notice of public hearing for publication. Diane Pape-Freiburger seconded the motion. 5 Aye, motion carried.

5. Public Comment

Wayne Kenniker – Asks about the vaccination process and more specifically, do we know how many county citizens fall into the phase 1B category? Of those in phase 1B, how many want to be vaccinated? It is concerning that there are not answers to these questions when the mask mandate end date is based on completing this phase. Wayne also stresses concern that those 65+ are not always tech savvy and cannot find information on how to sign-up for a vaccination.

Other public comments in the meeting were related to items on the agenda, which cannot be discussed at this time.

6. Adjournment

Hendrik Schultz made the motion to adjourn at 7:12pm. Katie Jones seconded the motion. 5 Aye, motion carried.

The BOH will still meet Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 6pm via Zoom. This will no longer serve as the public hearing for the mask mandate resolution.