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BOARD OF PEMBINA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PROCEEDINGS

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Special Meeting

September 28, 2021

11:00 AM

Board of Pembina County Commissioners met in Special Session at 11:00 AM in the Farmers Room of the Pembina County Courthouse with the following members present: Jim Benjaminson, Laverne Doyle, Nick Rutherford, and Hugh Ralston. Available by phone: Hetty Walker. Others in attendance were Julie Hardy, Revel Sapa, Samantha Weeks, Missy Morden and Casey Krieg.

Chairperson Doyle called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM.

Julie Hardy, Public Health Director, reviewed several handouts showing statistics and data related to COVID 19 with the Commission. COVID is an airborne pathogen which makes it very difficult to control. The national picture of cases and hospital admissions were reviewed for the past four months, showing a definite increase in cases and hospitalizations since June. The North Dakota profile report from 9/24/2021 showing case rates, NAAT (testing) positivity, hospital admissions and death rates was reviewed. Pembina County positive case numbers from April 2020 through September 2021 show one case in June 2021 increasing to 191 cases by September 2021. A mean change in the daily number of COVID-19 cases comparing counties with school mask requirements to counties without school mask requirements was reviewed, showing schools without mask requirements were 3½ times more likely to have COVID-19 outbreaks compared with schools that started the year with mask requirements. Tests are coming back as 100% Delta. It has been determined that the Delta variant is 200% more transmissible and results in up to 1000 times higher viral load compared to previous variants. This means, on average, one person can infect 6-10 people, which is similar to chickenpox but higher than smallpox. Since children under the age of 12 are not able to be vaccinated the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommend that in order for schools to remain open, which is of critical importance to the education and wellbeing of children and families, certain public health measures must be instituted and adhered to, like universal mask wearing. A collective approach is far more effective than an individualistic approach. While masks provide protection to the wearer, they primarily serve as source control and the greatest benefits occur if everyone wears them. Ms. Hardy is requesting the Commission consider rescinding the motion made at the September 21, 2021

meeting regarding the revised COVID-19 standing policy. Ms. Hardy would like the county to follow the guidelines set by the CDC for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals and feels, since Pembina County is still peaking in the number of positive tests, masks should be mandated for larger groups of individuals until the number of positive cases decreases.

Missy Morden expressed her concern with the COVID-19 vaccine being released for emergency use and not fully tested prior to use. Discussion followed on other vaccines that have been released for emergency use prior to being fully tested. Ms. Morden stated she feels wearing masks should be a personal choice versus a mandate.

Motion made by Jim Benjaminson and seconded by Nick Rutherford to rescind the motion made at the September 21, 2021 regarding the adoption of a revised COVID 19 standing policy. Roll call vote: Jim Benjaminson – yes; Laverne Doyle – yes; Nick Rutherford – yes; Hugh Ralston – yes; Hetty Walker – yes. Motion carried.

Motion made by Nick Rutherford and seconded by Hugh Ralston to follow the original CDC guidelines for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals who are close contacts of a positive case, requiring masks be worn when a large group is in attendance, and highly recommending mask wearing for individuals. Roll call vote: Jim Benjaminson – yes; Laverne Doyle – yes; Nick Rutherford – yes; Hugh Ralston – yes; Hetty Walker – yes. Motion carried.

Motion made by Jim Benjaminson and seconded by Hugh Ralston to adjourn the meeting. All voting in favor; motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 12:35 PM.