



February 4, 2021

The Board of Chaves County Commissioners held a Special Commission Meeting in the Commission Chamber of the Joe Skeen Building, #1 St. Mary's Place in Roswell, New Mexico. Chairman Cavin called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. Commissioner Bilberry led the pledge and Commissioner Ezzell led in prayer. Those present were Commissioners Bilberry, Cavin, Dana, Ezzell, and Taylor. Also present were Interim County Manager Bill Williams, Sheriff Mike Herrington, County Clerk Cindy Fuller, news media, staff and guests.

PRESENTATION

Dr. Daniel Sosin, medical epidemiologist, Emerging Infections Program, New Mexico Department of Health participated via zoom. Commissioner Cavin stated there were several elected officials in the room and also online that would be given a chance to ask questions. Dr. Sosin stated he would like to start by discussing the testing metrics and how they are calculated. How do we know we're getting all the tests and that they are accurate? The law requires that all results associated with SARS COVID 2 be sent to the State, both positive and negative tests. The ultimate goal is to not overwhelm our healthcare systems. The thresholds are set by the Governor. How does the testing capacity affect the percent positivity rate? The more people we test the more we will find that are not infected and the positive percentage will go down. Surveillance testing is more likely to pick up people not infected. Positivity was upwards of 20% at one time. They are worried about COVID coming back or the rates going back up. They are watching the mutations and variants of concern nationally. Large gatherings for the Super Bowl are discouraged. They are making strides with the limited vaccines they have. Commissioner Cavin asked if the Governor has changed the gating criteria? Dr. Sosin stated that we know from experience that indoor gatherings are a risk. The criteria is 8 cases per 100,000. Commissioner Cavin stated that we have to get our businesses and restaurants back open. Commissioner Cavin asked about vaccines statewide. Dr. Sosin stated they get weekly distributions but it's not enough for what is needed. They have moved from health care workers and first responders to residents of long-term care facilities and those over 75.

Commissioner Bilberry asked why there is such a variation in the number of cases per day. Why are the spikes up and down? Dr. Sosin stated that the way cases are reported to the public is how they are reported to the State. Lab results vary from day to day. The decision was made to report results when the State gets them. They use a fourteen-day period to average out the overall positivity rate. Commissioner Bilberry stated that we need to get our businesses and schools open and asked if there was a way to get more accuracy in testing. Dr. Sosin stated that we must look at a week or two and they are not over reporting or under reporting.

Curry County Manager Lance Pyle asked about schools using the hybrid approach and if there are any plans to change that and get our kids back full time. Dr. Sosin stated they anticipate new guidance from the CDC on in person learning. Children who are asymptomatic can transmit. We need to be attentive to control measures. Children are tested one quarter as much as adults. In person learning is a high priority for the State. Mr. Pyle asked if they are looking at increasing the number of days students can attend in person learning or the number of students allowed at one time. Dr. Sosin explained that the CDC isn't giving guidance on this. This information is coming from the PED.

Roswell City Councilman, Jason Perry, asked the Doctor what was being done at the Southern border with the relaxed restrictions on immigration. Dr. Sosin stated he is not aware of federal changes on the Southern border but would expect that testing and quarantine would increase.

Commissioner Cavin asked Dr. Sosin to speak to the variants. Dr. Sosin stated that what they've seen so far are viral strains from other countries. The concern is that we might see another increase in cases and hospitalizations. They are testing to identify new strains and understand trends. New strains will challenge their ability to immunize the population. More information should be coming on effectiveness of the vaccines.

Hope Morales, RISD Board President, asked as the State comes up with safety measures, is it safe for our football players to wear masks during a contact sport? Dr. Sosin stated that youth sports are being handled differently. He would need to better understand before he could answer if the masks will cause more harm than good. Ms. Morales asked where the guidance was coming from. Dr. Sosin stated from the Governor's Office. He can look at the guidance and we can revisit this issue.

Commissioner Cavin stated one of the Curry County Commissioners would like to know if vaccines will be mandatory. Dr. Sosin stated he has never seen a medical treatment be required but those who are vaccinated may have different privileges.

Commissioner Ezell asked why the red to green implementation was on a County basis and can it be more local? Dr. Sosin stated that from a data standpoint it's hard to draw lines and have accurate data. This would need to be answered by the Governor's Office.

Commissioner Bilberry asked if we keep having variants how can we continue keeping our businesses closed? Dr. Sosin stated that vaccines should have a significant impact along with mask wearing and social distancing. We haven't seen influenza. A new pandemic seems inconsistent with our history. Commissioner Bilberry asked why the school guidance is 3 minutes of contact and the CDC guidance is 15 minutes. Dr. Sosin stated that the times have moved. The decision in the State was to hold at the 3 minutes.

Commissioner Cavin stated Curry County Commissioner, Martin, asked if people are not vaccinated are civil rights going to be restricted? Dr. Sosin stated he has not had any discussions about this at his level. Commissioner Cavin recognized the elected officials in the room, Roswell City Councilors Jason Perry and Margaret Kennard. He recognized the Chaves County Clerk, Cindy Fuller, and the Chaves County Sherriff, Mike Herrington, as well as the undersheriff, Charles Isles, and Dr. Shawn Powell from Eastern New Mexico University. He thanked Dr. Sosin for his time. The Doctor thanked everyone for their work at the county level and stated he's happy to come back or have questions emailed to him.

Further discussion continued with the Commissioners to include comments that the Governor is in control, the concern at our Southern border, the difference in the State and CDC guidelines, and that testing is not a true indicator of results. Commissioner Cavin stated we need our businesses open. He thanked Congresswoman Herrell's staff that was present, Margaret Kennard and Bridget Condon.

AGREEMENT AND RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION R-21-006 OPPOING HB4

All five Commissioners participated in reading Resolution R-21-006. Commissioner Cavin stated we need common sense in Santa Fe about how bad this will be. Commissioner Bilberry moved to approve R-21-006. Commissioner Dana seconded the motion. A voice vote was unanimous. The motion carried.

UNSCHEDULED COMMUNICATIONS

Rita Kane Doerhoefer stated she called the State Board about her vaccine. The email the State sent her went to her junk mail and now she's at the back of the line. She hasn't had any skunks, but she has had a mountain lion and an albino buck.

Sheriff Herrington stated he appreciates the Commission passing this resolution. There is not justification for this bill. The presentation this morning went in circles. We need to continue on with life. People are moving to Texas at a fast rate. It is time to move forward and get back to business. He appreciates the Commission opposing HB4.

Bridgett Conden stated she is Congresswoman Herrell's District Director. She just moved to Roswell and is excited to work with everyone. She gave the office contact information.

MANAGER'S COMMUNICATIONS

Bill Williams thanked Alfredo and Alys for working through the technical difficulties this morning. He thanked all the elected officials for joining today and thanked the Sheriff. He also thanked all Chaves County employees.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMUNICATIONS

Commissioner Taylor stated he's not sure the Doctor gave us any information than what we already had. Get vaccinated.

Commissioner Dana stated she's not sure why she got her flu shot. She welcomed Bridget. She stated we are losing people and it's sad that Mimi Stewart told people to pack their bags and move to Texas. This session in Santa Fe is "my way or the highway". Pay attention. Who is watching Santa Fe? We heard some good information today and some not so good. She thanked the Commission for the resolution.

Commissioner Ezzell said the target is 8 cases per 100,000. Chaves County has to have fewer than 5.2 cases per day to re-open.

Commissioner Bilberry thanked all the elected officials. He stated we need more unity and we didn't get answers about our businesses and schools reopening. It's not about dying – it's about living.

Commissioner Cavin thanked Commissioner Bilberry for helping get someone to talk to us. If the gating criteria doesn't change, we're not going anywhere. Hopefully, it will come to a halt and common sense will prevail. 160 bills were dropped on Monday in the Legislature. People are moving across state lines to have a life. If HB 4 goes to the Governor and she signs it, it will be a financial death sentence. He thanked everyone for being at the meeting and stated we're a great family. The next meeting will be February 18th.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:56 pm.

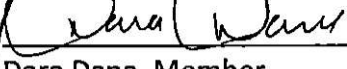
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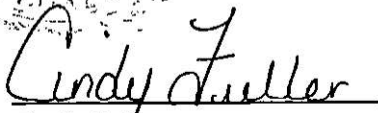


T. Calder Ezzell Jr, Member



Richard C. Taylor, Member





Cindy Fuller
County Clerk