

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES
COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 10, 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Avelino Silva, Co-chair; Jorge Cruz, Co-chair; Michael DeFilippo, Michelle Lyons, Maria Pereira, Samia Suliman

OTHERS: Council Member(s): M. E. Brantley, J. Herron, M. McBride-Lee & R. Roman-Christy; C. Vickers, Legislative Director; Dr. Rockman Ferrigno, YNHH Emergency Department, Ebony Jackson-Shaheed, Health & Social Services Department Consultant, Martha Judd, YNHH Community and Government Relations Coordinator; Dr. Paul Possenti, Kim Dickey, Health & Social Services Department, Consultant, M. Retamar, Laurelwood Place Apartments Senior Manager; Barbara, Michael's Phone, 1-203- 726-3798; 1-929-436-2866

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Silva called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. A quorum was present.

Co-chair Silva said that Ms. Papa had a conflict in her schedule and would try to join the meeting later.

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 10, 2021
(Regular Meeting).

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ MOVED THE MINUTE OF THE FEBRUARY 10, 2021 REGULAR MEETING.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PEREIRA MOVED TO AMEND THE MINUTES AS FOLLOWS TO HER PREVIOUS STATEMENT:**

PAGE 1, PARAGRAPH 7; THE TEXT STATES: "SHE NOTED THAT MR. MARIO TESTA AND MR. MIKE GIANNATTI HAD BEEN ESCORTED IN FOR THEIR VACCINES AND THEY WERE NOT 75."

COUNCIL MEMBER PEREIRA STATED THAT SHE DID NOT KNOW IF MARIO TESTO WAS ESCORTED IN FOR THE VACCINE. THE SENTENCE SHOULD READ AS FOLLOWS:

"SHE NOTED THAT MR. MARIO TESTA AND MR. MIKE GIANNATTI HAD RECEIVED VACCINES AND THEY WERE NOT 75."

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Roman-Christy asked if Ms. Papa was going to be present at the meeting. Council Member Silva said that Ms. Papa was not able to attend. Council Member Roman-Christy asked who the presenter would be. Council Member Silva said that Ms. Judd and several other individuals would be presenting information.

Council Member Pereira said that on February 18th CT Post announced that Travon Jones was the Acting Health Director. She wished to know why he was not listed on the City Director or present at this meeting. He has not been quoted in the newspaper, the only quotes are from Ms. Papa and Mr. Appleby.

Council Member Cruz said that he had received a call from Ms. Papa about her schedule conflict. Ms. Judd was at the meeting to present the information and answer questions. He said that there had been a document sent out to everyone.

Informational Session with Ms. Tammy Papa Acting Deputy Director, Health Department regarding an update on the availability of COVID vaccines for senior residents living in senior buildings as well how they're utilizing the mobile vaccine distribution van.

Ms. Judd introduced Dr. Ferrigno who is the head of Emergency Department at YNHH. Dr. Ferrigno said that there were three vaccines available. Moderna and Pfizer had an efficacy rate of over 90 percent. He said that the first two had a six week efficacy rate. The Johnson and Johnson is different in that it never becomes part of the cells. It is much more like a flu vaccine but works similarly to the Moderna and Pfizer. The efficacy of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine is in the 60 percentile range, but only had a two week window until full efficacy. However, it is more effective in that Johnson and Johnson is only one shot and the efficacy time is shorter.

Dr. Paul Possenti gave a brief overview of when the vaccines become fully potent.

Council Member Cruz then asked several technical questions based on the vaccine distribution information from a document he had received.

Council Member Cruz asked if someone who had received both doses of the vaccines would be required to continue to be tested.

Dr. Ferrigno said that there was still a chance that a vaccine recipient could get COVID after the second dose.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that she had both Pfizer doses. She wished to know if she needed the Johnson and Johnson dose. Dr. Possenti said that Council Member McBride-Lee did not need further doses.

Dr. Possenti said that they had started a mass vaccine site at UB and it went well. When they have vaccines in stock, they can have up to 20 vaccinators going on. Council Member Pereira said that her significant other had gone to the UB clinic site and it worked like a well-oiled machine.

Council Member Cruz asked when the age group would drop below 65. Dr. Possenti said that the State would be vaccinating 45 and older in late March. Currently they are vaccinating age 55 and older.

Council Member Cruz said that he would like to have a list of the senior housing projects that had been vaccinated. Ms. Judd said that they had spoken with Ms. Papa about this. The State has directed the Health Department to handle the senior housing projects. Council Member Brantley confirmed that this was so.

Council Member Lyons said that it was good to know that the vaccine does not impact the DNA. She asked if the Council Members could get a list of when the vaccines would be available to the various age groups.

Council Member Herron asked when the home health care aides would be able to get their vaccines. So far, they have been denied the vaccine. Ms. Judd said that she did not have the Governor's order available.

Council Member Herron said that some of these health aides were around the clock, others were there for several hours.

Dr. Ferrigno said that the home health aides that are caring for individuals likely have been vaccinated. It's a challenge to incorporate everyone. Dr. Possenti said that the State wanted the 55 and over age group first and now they are opening it up to teachers.

Council Member Herron said that many of the home bound seniors have not been vaccinated yet. It has been a slow process because they did not have a mobile unit.

Ms. Judd said that the State assigned the Health Department to handle the home bound residents. They are not allowed to take on additional patients.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked Council Member Silva and Council Member Cruz to let the Council Members know if they have an Acting Health Director.

Council Member Brantley said Council Member Cruz was concerned about age categories and Council Member Herron is concerned about the home bound seniors. She encouraged Council Member Herron to reach out to Ms. Papa. It is up to each and every Council Member to follow up for the home bound residents in their districts.

Council Member Brantley asked if there was any way possible for the YNHH staff to emphasize to these health care aides to get vaccinated because many of them are from black and brown communities and live in multi-generational homes.

Ms. Judd said that there was a call center and they have been encouraging people to call the center. They have space set aside for Bridgeport residents so when the caller gives their zip code, they can be identified as a Bridgeport resident and routed into one of the open slots. She went on to give additional information regarding their community outreach efforts.

The City divided up the schools and daycare centers and distributed the names between four different health care providers. There will be a pop up clinic at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit on Union Avenue.

Testing has been ongoing at the Islamic Center on State Street, and also at Hall House and the Raphola Taylor Center.

Council Member Pereira said it was disturbing that the graph with the old census data that shows the largest population is Hispanic, followed by African-American, and then white. She said that it concerned her that they were close to 78% black and brown in population. She asked what caused the disparity in race, ethnicity and gender on these charts.

Dr. Ferrigno said that they were working at getting better handling the outreach. He said that he saw more males receiving the vaccines than females.

Dr. Possenti said that he saw more males coming for the Johnson and Johnson because it is one and done. However, education is key. The people hear on Facebook about those who get sick from the vaccines. Discussion followed about whether the urban dense cities were receiving enough vaccines.

Council Member Pereira asked why Bridgeport has been at the bottom of the list for successful vaccinations. Dr. Possenti said that they had been working with the City to identify vaccine sites and then allocating the vaccine doses. There are also issues with the digital divide.

Council Member Cruz said that there were two individuals who had been hired as consultants and also a Senior Manager for Laurelwood Place Apartments.

Council Member Brantley said that the black community was still reluctant to get the vaccine because of the Tuskegee experiment. She added that there were white people from out of town coming to Bridgeport because they could schedule it on their phones.

Council Member Brantley said that she walks at Seaside Park and St. Mary's and those who are at St. Mary's often have had their first shot, while the people at Seaside Park often refuse to take the vaccine information sheets. The Council Members need to get out there and talk to their constituents.

Ms. Retamar, the Senior Manager for Laurelwood Place Apartments, said that they had been able to have a clinic at their building. The residents received their first shot last month and they will have their second shot in the next week or two. It went well. She said that they would like to continue to have these at their site. She thanked Council Member Brantley and Council Member Cruz for reaching out to their community.

Ms. Dickey, the Health & Social Services Department Consultant, said that her specialty was outreach. She ask Council Member Pereira about her district and Council Member Pereira gave her the details of the senior housing projects in her district. She said that she was deeply disturbed that the HUD property had not received the same attention that the privately owned senior project which had CVS come in and vaccinate all the residents.

Ms. Dickey said that she was hired to help facilitate the vaccine efforts. She added that she would be following up on the senior housing projects.

Council Member Cruz asked Ms. Dickey if she and Ms. Jackson-Shaheed spoke Spanish. Neither consultants do.

Council Member Cruz said that he would like to speak with the consultants that would be working in his district, so he could work with them.

Ms. Dickey said that there has to be some type of trust established with the black and brown communities. She said that she had done this for more than 15 years in mixed communities and the common theme is that people want to be heard.

Ms. Jackson-Shaheed said that she was an epidemiologist and would not be working primarily with Ms. Dickey. Her focus is on workplace vaccination guidelines and they have been discussing creating a pamphlet about the workplace vaccination guidelines. She works on incorporating the Governor's orders and the CDC releases into guidelines.

Council Member Lyons said she had been checking on the senior housing projects, which are not city owned. She will be following up by sending them the information she is hearing at the meeting. She will also forward the documentation that she received tonight.

Council Member Silva said that there were issues about distrust by the African Americans and he agreed with what many Council Members said. It will be important to build trust.

Council Member Silva thanked everyone who participated in the meeting.

Council Member Cruz asked Ms. Jackson-Shaheed and Ms. Dickey to contact him.

Council Member Pereira thanked Ms. Judd for Ms. Judd's responses to Council Member Pereira's emails. The best thing that they can do is reach out to the black and brown communities.

Council Member Pereira reiterated her earlier request about Mr. Jones and why he was not available at the meeting.

Council Member Herron said that it was a misquote by Mr. Appleby that was put in the CT Post. Mr. Jones has not been appointed as Acting Health Director at this time.

Council Member Brantley said that Mr. Jones has been working very hard during this vaccination process. He is working in the community and is working behind the scenes.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services