

RICHARDSON COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

MARCH 25, 2020

Sheriff Hardesty, Chairman, called to order the meeting of the Richardson County Board of Health at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 25, 2020. Sheriff Hardesty, Chairman of the Board and Dr. Allan Tramp the appointed physician/medical advisor and the Secretary, Mary L. Eickhoff, Richardson County Clerk were all present.

Sheriff Hardesty made note that due to this meeting being offered through a teleconference that the Open Meeting Laws were posted at the entrance to this meeting room and were also available for public review on the Richardson County website, www.co.richardson.ne.us.

The minutes of the March 18, 2020, meeting have been forwarded to the members and were thereby approved.

The agenda was provided to the media and was posted at the Richardson County Courthouse in the First Floor Lobby, the Lower Level Lobby and on the Commissioner's Meeting Room door on the 2nd Floor, all entrance doors at the Courthouse and on the Richardson County website www.co.richardson.ne.us.

Several persons from different agencies and departments were requested to participate in the meeting: **Grant Brueggemann**, Executive Director, SE NE Health Department; **Kathy Messner** from the Community Medical Center; **Brian Kirkendall**, Richardson County EMA Director; County Attorney, **Doug Merz**; County Board Chairman, **David Sickel**; **Duane Armbruster**, Falls City Chief of Police and member of the Falls City Board of Health; **Mike Dunn**, member of the Falls City Board of Health; **Marty Lewis** from the Humboldt Ambulance squad; **Gary Jorn** of the Falls City Ambulance squad.

Due to the need to offer teleconferencing for the meeting the following ground rules of the meeting to prevent talking over others were given:

- 1) Request to mute phones
- 2) Chairman will give everyone an opportunity to speak by calling on you in list form.
- 3) State name prior to speaking, Chairman will then repeat your name so that everyone will know who is speaking.
- 4) When a person is completed speaking they should indicate they are finished.

Sheriff Hardesty then allowed Grant Brueggeman, Southeast Nebraska Health Department, to review the procedures in place, notification and chain of command, etc. Mr. Brueggeman reported that there are 61 cases in Nebraska as of today, with 0 positive cases reported in Richardson County. Mr. Brueggeman, relayed the importance for the County and the cities to reinforce the recommendation of a limit of 10 persons at non-essential places and 6 feet distancing from one another in public. He reported that he is preparing a draft of regulations for the Southeast District Health Department to implement for the prevention of spread of communicable disease, illness, or poisoning to submit to the State of Nebraska Health Department for approval and after that then can be forwarded to the five counties in the Southeast District for their approval by the Board of Commissioners which would then allow the SE NE Department of Health to enforce the regulations within the five county area (Johnson, Nemaha, Pawnee, Otoe and Richardson) with the assistance of designated persons from those counties to assist. Mr. Burgemann also reported that a bill is being considered in the Legislature today and if passed will provide funding to the SE Health Dept to allow for more staff to assist with positive test investigations. Grant requested that the Emergency Management Agency Director, Brian Kirkendall would be the preferred contact with the County.

Dr. Tramp reported no confirmed cases but tests have been done on patients that show symptoms who have traveled and symptomatic essential workers. Testing criteria is prioritizing to hospital patients with respiratory symptoms and persons who have symptoms that have been in contact with persons positive for COVID, symptomatic law enforcement, emergency personnel and health care workers and from a physician's order. He also introduced Dr. Samani, Chief of Staff at the Community Medical Center. Dr. Tramp indicated that the proposed regulations drafted by the Southeast Nebraska District Health Department are very outlined and when adopted then the Counties can allow the Southeast District Health Department, with the assistance of the County Sheriff and the County Attorney, to enforce such regulations for the prevention of spread of communicable disease, illness or poisoning in the County.

Brian Kirkendall, EMA Director update on the County COVID19 Planning Committee activity which includes offering service to those who are unable to get food or supplies as needed because of isolation. Mr. Kirkendall reported that they are working on a packet to be given to health care providers to then

give to those patients who will be in self-isolation that will include information on obtaining necessary supplies and food from local businesses that will deliver in the area and to include information on the importance of hand washing and keeping things sanitized. He reported that the County Board of Commissioners have signed a disaster declaration that included all cities, villages, businesses, schools and communities. He informed the Board that this declaration qualifies those mentioned for reimbursement of expenses related to the COVID pandemic.

Mike Dunn, city attorney for the City of Falls City asked whether the County was going to put into effect any regulation to mandate the no more than 10 persons in a social gathering. The Sheriff indicated that it has been reviewed and discussed. Mr. Dunn reported that the Board of Health of Falls City is looking at implementing the mandate due to some establishments not complying with the recommendation. The City's goal is not to shut down businesses and want them to continue to operate but request their full cooperation to following the 10 person recommendation.

Sheriff explained that there are establishments in the County that are not complying with the recommendation and that are attracting persons from other areas including across state lines.

Duane Armbruster reported that the City of Falls City Health Board will be meeting at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 26 to consider adopting a ruling and regulation to mandate the 10 person limit in establishments/business that are non-essential.

Dr. Tramp requested that Kerry Holdsworth, Chief Clinical Officer at the Community Medical Center report on a meeting that was held this morning and update the group on the readiness of the hospital and informed that testing kits are ready for patients who may have been in a high exposure area and if the need arises for all emergency medical staff. They will be receiving the test swabs that will provide more opportunity for testing. She informed the Board that the hospital staff are making preparations for the possible spike in the patients that might need to be admitted due to the virus. The staff is reviewing procedures during a surge of capacity, there is access to 6 ventilators including anesthesia machines which can be used for treatment if supplies are available to change out, have reviewed patient transfer options to other facilities if needed and staff is also developing an ethics panel. The hospital is holding the line with current operations and lots of planning is in the works. The biggest concern especially is if staff becomes infected. They are beginning to screen all visitors and patients with appointments. The hospital has limited 1 visitor allowed per patient per day and will begin employee screening.

County Attorney, Doug Merz, requested that the proposed regulations being prepared by the Southeast Nebraska Health Department be sent to counties before they are adopted by the Department.

The Board of Health relayed they are less anxious in that people are working together and thankful at this point no proven cases but that doesn't mean that the socialization does not need to stop. Dr. Tramp indicated that his preference and hopes are that everyone uses common sense and keep the gatherings at less than 10 persons and distancing of 6 feet apart so to keep the trickle factor of positive cases. He indicated that the multiplication factors of spreading the virus is bizarre.

Sheriff Hardesty declared the meeting adjourned at 11:52 a.m. and tentatively schedule another meeting for April 8, 2020 at 11:00 a.m.

Sheriff Hardesty, Chairman
Richardson County Board of Health

Mary L. Eickhoff, Secretary
Richardson County Clerk