



MINUTES

St. Clair County Board of Commissioners Human Services Committee

**Board of Commissioners' Room
County Administrative Office Building, 2nd Floor
200 Grand River Avenue
Port Huron, MI 48060**

October 7, 2021 at 6:00 PM

1. Roll Call/Opening/Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Beedon called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Greg McConnell, Jorja Baldwin, Jeff Bohm, Duke Dunn, Dave Rushing, Dave Vandenbossche and Lisa Beedon

Commissioners Absent: None

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. Additions/Deletions/Changes to the Agenda

Moved by David Rushing, supported by Dave Vandenbossche, to add the Knights of Columbus proclamation and the intent for a general welfare resolution to the agenda as items 7A and 7B. Carried - Voice Vote 7-0. Ayes: Baldwin, Beedon, Bohm, Dunn, McConnell, Rushing, Vandenbossche.

Moved by David Rushing, supported by Duke Dunn, to approve the agenda as revised. Carried - Voice Vote 7-0. Ayes: Baldwin, Beedon, Bohm, Dunn, McConnell, Rushing, Vandenbossche.

3. Citizens to be Heard

Pam Binsfeld, Marysville - re: Covid statistics, test results and laws broken

Steve Simasko, Avoca - re: Public Health Order and Health Department oversight

Rebecca Campau, Fort Gratiot - re: Public Health support and effectiveness of mitigation measures

Carolyn Richards, Avoca - re: FOIA information, inaccurate data, Health Department insubordination,

Constitution and opposing quarantine

Sara Schmaltz, Marysville - yielded time to Carolyn Richards

Lyndsey Davidson, Columbus - re: Covid statistics, Public Health Order rescinded due to funding, early intervention and healthy habits

Calista Harman, Allenton - yielded to Lyndsey Davidson

Mike McClelland, Yale - re: prior sex ed class in Yale School district, 2008 Swine Flu vaccine, distributed a folder of information, movie regarding a University of Yale study, talked to many sources and falsehoods

Leisa Murphy - yielded to Mike McClelland

Kelley Veloz, East China - yielded to Mike McClelland

Marcy McClelland, Yale - re: in favor of a Resolution, find solutions and move in a new direction

Kim Hortop, Yale - re: discussed a video of Dr. Mercatante with Tray Smith, results using carbon dioxide detector while wearing a mask and the US Code

Mikelyn Burnell, Port Huron - re: Declaration of Independence, Constitutions, mandates and a petition to restrict emergency orders to 28 days without legislative approval

Susan Lester, St. Clair - re: Covid-19 statistics, quarantine order being discriminatory, virus is politicized and termination of Dr. Mercatante

Geneva Bivens, Port Huron - re: termination of Dr. Mercatante, Covid patients in nursing homes, teens pressuring peers into vaccination, and mental health issues

Eric Bivens, Port Huron - re: respect for the position, termination of Dr. Mercatante, immune system and politics in process

Patrick Muneio, Emmett - re: do job properly and thoroughly, pro and con professional task force, accountability to citizens

Melissa Skrip, Port Huron - re: effects of quarantining on children, quarantine letter

Virginia Coury, Fort Gratiot - re: consider science and not politics, effectiveness of vaccines, quarantine and masks, applaud those who do the right thing

Abigail Hicus, St. Clair - re: not being heard, right to speak, Constitutional protections, and tyranny

Tracy Birgy - re: treatment prescribed by Dr. for Covid and threats to his license, bacterial pneumonia from masks, and new science

Vic Amato, Marysville - re: supports Dr. Mercatante, contact tracing, vaccine and masks, quarantine and masks not in Constitution, and smallpox and polio vaccines

Shawn Treadaway, St. Clair - re: Dr. Mercatante refusal to rescind quarantine order, demographics of those who support her, Health Department facebook censorship e-mail not responded to, decisions monicized, who supervises Dr. Mercatante

Jessica Holcomb, St. Clair - yielded to Shawn Treadaway

Dawn Schaefer, Fort Gratiot - re: inaccurate testing, notified son was a close contact 5 days after exposure and became symptomatic and Covid positive, contact tracing the EUA for the vaccines

Lauren Martin, East China - yielded to Dawn Schaefer

Kevin Watkins, Wales - re: effectiveness of masks, smallpox vaccine was mandated, intimidation, respect, opposes termination of Dr. Mercatante, micromanagement

Kevin Totty, Port Huron - yielded to Kevin Watkins

A 3 minute recess was held

Deb Johnson, St. Clair - re: CMH Board of Directors support Dr. Mercatante, disrespect, Health Department efforts to secure PPE and assistance with congregate living facilities, discussed awards received by Dr. Mercatante, lack of data to support mask wearing affecting mental health

Diane Lois, Kimball - yielded to Deb Johnson

Helen Hermes - re: discussed study done in Spain published in January, distributed handout detailing treatments provided to Covid patients, Emergency Use Authorization of vaccines,

Dawn Fulk - yielded to Helen Hermes

Rachelle Bonelli, St. Clair - re: support for Health Department, consensus among experts to vet information, study can prove anything, public health and safety laws, Covid is the enemy

Alphonso Amos, Port Huron - re: held forums with Dr. Mercatante and opposing viewpoints, opposition to Public Health Code needs to be addressed with Legislature, Dr. Mercatante doing her job, honor difference of opinions

Ruth Habalewsky, Fort Gratiot - yielded to Alphonso Amos

Carol Seaver, Kimball - re: missionary trip scheduled, party tested positive and placed on no fly list, flight delay and reputation of false positives on tests

Jon Schmaltz, Marysville - yielded to Carol Seaver

Mary Powell, Port Huron - re: quarantine, Health Department services, side effects of vaccine, and mandates versus personal health choice

Cindy Conant, Port Huron Township - yielded to Mary Powell

Patti Samar, Port Huron - re: support of Public Health Code, number of hours worked by Dr. Mercatante and years of training, allow Health Department to do their job, micro management and not a partisan issue

Pam Wall, Algonac - re: support the Health Department and staff, role of Health Department, mass vaccination efforts, undermine Health Department established by statute, free society requires rules, and follow the science

Jim Kaski, Marysville - re: pharmacist, difficult to trust media, contrast between those who care for health and those who do not, administration of vaccines with no adverse health outcomes, supports Dr. Mercatante

Cheryl Masters, Port Huron - re: SB introduced to prohibit mask mandate, cognitive dissidence, Covid has never been isolated, no science to support mask, Constitutional rights

Carey Fuller, Grant Township - re: 14th amendment, Health Department has no new information, introduction of new information available

Julie Wessel, Avoca - re: multidisciplinary approach, pathogen protection measures, 3 minute comment period, open forum, available treatments not being used

Jordan Wessel, Avoca - re: suicide rates, remote schooling affect on grade point average, order rescinded due to funding

Kim Hetzel, Columbus - yielded to Jordan Wessel

Jessica Schulte, Fort Gratiot - re: other Health Department services are great, opposed to mandates, wellness and freedom of choice

Several requests were received to include their comments in the minutes.

Rosalyn Sampeer, Port Huron

Commissioners: Anti maskers and anti vaxxers say they have a right to not wear masks or get vaccinated, but what about the rights of other people to not be infected by a deadly disease because of someone else's choice? Do their rights not matter? By refusing to wear masks & get vaccinated, anti-maskers and anti-vaxxers choose to endanger the health, safety, and lives of others. They are saying their freedom of choice is more important than the freedoms of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness of their neighbors. More freedoms are lost if anti-maskers and anti-vaxxers get their way. Good government must make decisions that result in the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

Sue Amato requested the following letter be included in the minutes:

Dear Commissioner Dunn:

My name is Susan Amato and I served as Director of Health Education and Planning for the St. Clair County Health Department for 23 years.

I am deeply troubled by the recent "Resolution to promote general welfare." I do not see how any of the components serve to secure the general welfare of SCC citizens! In fact it does quite the opposite.

We have a well credentialed, passionate and incredibly dedicated Medical Health Officer charged with protecting the health of our residents and advising us how to best prevent infection with the current pandemic. Quarantine, contact tracing and, in certain cases, vaccine mandates are time tested and scientifically based methods necessary to preventing infection. Eliminating these important mitigation activities will only increase the amount of infection, disease and death within our community.

The state legislature has given Dr. Mercatante no choice but to remove these practices, which is clearly not in our best interest. On what basis do elected officials think they have the knowledge and experience to make decisions about MY HEALTH? We need Dr. Mercatante's expertise and leadership to see us through the pandemic. Firing her is irresponsible and dangerous to the health of St. Clair County residents.

Stephanie Armstrong-Helton, Fort Gratiot requested the following be included in the minutes:

I wanted to let you know how truly disappointed I am in the leadership of St. Clair County. Allowing individuals who have no scientific or medical background to undermine the health and safety of our county is simply unacceptable!

I work for a national health care system and I can tell you, the folks fighting this deadly pandemic on the front lines are exhausted, burnt out and their resources are depleted. Are you aware that hospitals in two states have had to enact crisis levels of care? That means that important, life-saving medical care is being denied because of the volume of COVID-19 patients, being care for in hospital corridors, are taking precedence. This is all because those two states have chosen to not demand health protections such as mask wearing, vaccines and quarantines. Closer to home, a lifesaving surgery to remove colon cancer was postponed three months due to the latest Michigan surge in our region, now my coworker's sister is riddled with cancer throughout her body; she will likely not survive. The death toll related to this pandemic is too great to take the health of our family, friends and loved ones for granted.

I have watched Annette Mercatante, MD, offer measured and steady guidance since the

beginning of the pandemic. How shameful that some members of the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners have FAILED to support her decisions to follow life-save guidance all because they are bowing to ridiculous political pressure that is not grounded in science and in many cases not even rooted in reality. This is NOT a political issue. It's a matter of public health and safety.

The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution calls us all to "promote the general welfare" of our nation and each other. I would request that St. Clair County leadership keep in mind that our general welfare includes the ability to live without fear or threat of infection and disease from other who refuse to contribute to the wellbeing of our community through vaccine, mask wearing and other mitigation efforts, to eradicate this pandemic on behalf of us all.

I trust Dr. Mercatante and her commitment to the health of our community, her support is needed. I also urge you and your colleague to support mask wearing, greater efforts to get people vaccinated and other measures designed to alleviate the spread of this deadly virus.

4. Updates

A. Public Health Order - Corporation Counsel Update

Corporation Counsel, Gary Fletcher, stated he requested the opportunity to speak due to a possible misunderstanding at the 09/16/21 Regular Board meeting. He stated he values the reputation he has built for himself. Commissioner Rushing requested answers to several questions. At that time, Mr. Fletcher stated he would research the questions and provide a response. Two individuals contacted Mr. Fletcher during the 09/16/21 meeting to discuss comments made by Commissioner Rushing that Mr. Fletcher was supposed to provide answers to his questions and he never did.

Mr. Fletcher indicated on 09/17/21 he sent an e-mail to the Board of Commissioners, including Commissioner Rushing, stating he was aware of the comments made at the meeting. Commissioner Rushing replied and stated he would need to see the e-mail that was sent to him. Mr. Fletcher sent an e-mail to the Board on 09/08/21 with a draft version of his letter requesting input to determine all requested points were covered. Later the same day, another e-mail was sent to the Board with the final legal opinion attached along with the Resurrection Court case and stating same could be posted on the County and Health Department. On 9/9/21 Administrator/Controller Hepting sent an e-mail to the Board and Mr. Fletcher indicating the information had been posted on the websites. Mr. Rushing then acknowledged he had received them.

Mr. Fletcher concluded by stating he has since had a meeting with Commissioner Rushing. With the amount of correspondence Commissioner Rushing receives, he missed that e-mail. Mr. Fletcher wanted to address the issue to protect the reputation of both him and his firm.

5. Conceptual Initiatives

None

6. Old Business

None

7. New Business

None

A. Proclamation Recognizing Knights of Columbus Msgr. Kromenaker Council #2251 100th Anniversary

Moved by David Rushing, supported by Duke Dunn, to move as a Committee of the Whole (for final action to approve the Proclamation recognizing Knights of Columbus Msgr. Kromenaker Council #2221 100th Anniversary. Carried - Voice Vote 7-0. Ayes: Baldwin, Beedon, Bohm, Dunn, McConnell, Rushing, Vandenbossche.

B. Intent for General Welfare Resolution

Commissioner Rushing indicated he has received several versions of resolutions and Corporation Counsel wil. review and then draft a resolution specific to St. Clair County. It will then be added to the agenda for potential approval. Commissioner Bohm indicated that while items are added to the agenda the night of the meeting, they have been reviewed by Administration and Corporation Counsel prior to. Mr. Fletcher requested the Commissioner send their thoughts about items to include to either him or Administrator/Controller Hepting.

Commissioner Beedon inquired whether a resolution, if adopted, would supercede public health, State or Federal directives. Mr. Fletcher indicated it is his legal opinion that the authority to issue or enforce public health orders lies solely with the Health Director. He further indicated the Board does not have the authority to overturn Federal or State mandates. Some discussion continued regarding the resolution being a political statement.

Moved by David Rushing, supported by Jeff Bohm, to have the intent to have a General Welfare Resolution drafted. Ayes: Baldwin, Bohm, Dunn, McConnell, Rushing, Vandenbossche. Nays: Beedon.

8. Other Human Services Matters

None

9. Information Only

Moved by Greg McConnell, supported by Jorja Baldwin, to receive and file items 9A and 9B as information only. Carried - Voice Vote 7-0. Ayes: Baldwin, Beedon, Bohm, Dunn, McConnell, Rushing, Vandenbossche.

A. SCC Health Department Points of Interest

B. Citizen Comments to Administrator/Controller - Public Health Order

10. Receive and File Packets

Moved by David Rushing, supported by Duke Dunn, to receive and file packets and all information received. Carried - Voice Vote 7-0. Ayes: Baldwin, Beedon, Bohm, Dunn, McConnell, Rushing, Vandenbossche.

11. Adjournment

Moved by David Rushing, supported by Jorja Baldwin, to adjourn at 8:53 p.m. Carried - Voice Vote 7-0. Ayes: Baldwin, Beedon, Bohm, Dunn, McConnell, Rushing, Vandenbossche.

Committee Chair: Lisa Beedon

Note: The County complies with the "Americans with Disabilities Act" and if auxiliary aids or services are required at the meeting for individuals with disabilities, please contact Administrator/Controller's Office, Suite 203, 200 Grand River Avenue, Port Huron, MI 48060, (810) 989-6900 three days prior to said meeting.