



Coronavirus Ad Hoc Committee
May 19, 2020 – 3:00 PM
Zoom Meeting

Yvonne McBride	Paul Livingston	Joe Walker	Dalhi Myers	Chakisse Newton
District 3	District 4	District 6	District 10	District 11

1. **Call to Order** – Mr. Livingston called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.
2. **Adoption of Agenda** – Ms. Newton moved, seconded by Ms. D. Myers, to adopt the agenda as amended to include an update on the grant process.

In Favor: McBride, Livingston, Walker, Myers and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

3. **Potential collaboration with PRISMA for COVID-19 Response** – Mr. Livingston stated Mr. Brown was to follow-up with PRISMA regarding a conversation Ms. D. Myers had. There was some potential for us to collaborate on somethings that would be beneficial to us.

Mr. Brown stated he had a conversation with PRISMA Health. As a part of the conversation, there were a few things that PRISMA seemed in favor of facilitating or assisting the County with, as we work to respond to COVID-19. The thought was before any specific steps, or decisions were made, we wanted to bring it to the committee to discuss them being the County’s conduit/local expert to help guide us through the process of reopening, and apply CDC guidelines, in a way that reflect what we need to focus on. Some of those things included a joint partnership with additional testing. The testing outline would include both the public and employees. PRISMA did talk about being a potential supply chain for the County by utilizing their supply chain to help facilitate the County receiving PPE-related items to supply to the County’s employees. PRISMA seemed willing to participate and facilitate those areas where the County might not have a strength in.

Ms. D. Myers stated she was surprised at the depth that PRISMA is willing to go to support Richland County. The Chair of PRISMA’s Coronavirus Task Force was offered to the County to assist us with our planning. She was gratified that they were so willing to partner. Given Richland County’s number of positive cases, it is imperative that we lead on this, and model how you partner with medical experts to get this stuff done.

Ms. McBride thanked Mr. Brown for following up on this. She has been on this for the last six weeks about getting an outside consultant, and working with PRISMA. The other entity that she wanted to involve was the University of South Carolina. She is thinking about the overall planning and opening up of the County, she was looking at the statistical data. She stated the University of South Carolina is doing a really good job on planning how they are going to open the school back up. It may benefit us to have a conversation with them.

Mr. Brown responded they did reach out to them, and they had a conflict, at that time, so they will reach back out to them. The more help in this area is certainly helpful.

Ms. McBride stated, when we get ready to open up, she would like to look at a chart, in terms of Richland County’s data. She was beginning to feel disillusioned, but she feels better now that we have reached out to PRISMA.

Mr. Livingston stated one of the things we might want to do is to focus on a few things, and what it is we want to get from the University of South Carolina.

Mr. Brown requested Dr. Ossmann to speak to the County's ability to work with PRISMA to apply the guidelines that have been put in place by PRISMA, as we think about what reopening may look like for the County, and what steps we need to consider.

Dr. Eric Ossmann stated where PRISMA Health can help the County the most is serving as a subject matter expert and decision support for various aspects of the reopening plan. There are probably a number of different guidance documents that are helpful to elected officials. The CDC has put together a fairly tight package of guidance documents. He would probably start with that document, and work through some specific issues. One of the challenges that everybody is experiencing is the workplace screening challenge, and how to do that across all your facilities on a consistent basis.

Mr. Brown requested Dr. Ossmann to provide the committee with a brief bio, and why it is beneficial for him to help facilitate this process.

Dr. Ossmann stated he is an emergency physician by training. He is the Chief of Preparedness at PRISMA. Prior to that he was the Chief of Service at Duke, and the Chief of Preparedness, as well. He also spent a number of years at the CDC, and was the subject matter expert for the Pandemic Preparedness Task Force for Acute Care.

Mr. Livingston stated one of our concerns is that we realize we have the highest number of patients in the State, and we want to make sure we do something that is unique to Richland County.

Dr. Ossmann stated some of the challenges that counties and municipal governments are facing is screening at the workplace, and how to do it consistently. The other is serving as a subject matter expert back to the business and faith-based community. He inquired as to what the primary challenge the County is facing with regard to reopening (i.e. personnel, equipment, etc.)

Mr. Brown responded from a County operations standpoint it would be protective equipment, processes/protocols in place that allow people to feel safe, and personnel. Thus some of the questions around proper equipment, screening and testing protocols, and ultimately what it looks like to encourage people to begin coming back and doing business and working at the County.

Dr. Ossmann stated the key thing is to do screening for everyone that is coming into the facility. It looks like the County is using the CDC guidance to screen people at the door, and using an oral or touchless thermometer. The screening process gives the employees and people coming to do business at the County some sense of security that there is a process in place. One of the challenges that different groups have faced with the screening process is how do you close the loop. For example, if one of the employees come in and have a temperature of 100.5, and they are sent home. Then, you have to figure out a way to close that loop, so you are aware of what their medical evaluation was. If they come back in 2 days, you have a degree of comfort that they were appropriately evaluated, and they are safe to return to the workplace. As far as equipment goes, he inquired if the County had any luck with the County EMD supplying PPEs for the screeners.

Mr. Brown responded they believe, at this point, for those people doing the screening we have that type of equipment available. He noted the people on the call have not reviewed the document Dr. Ossmann is referring to. There were questions about whether the document has expert level input, or is the information in the document reflective of the information that should be in there before Council considers it. He believes the County would need more infrared thermometers, and some other supply issues we would have to work through. The larger question would be whether or not, as a part of the screening protocol, if they cannot come into the facilities, how do you do that?

Ms. Newton stated her initial understanding was that we were having a conversation about whether we wanted to partner with PRISMA for guidance and counsel to help assist us to make sure we were making appropriate plans as we move forward with COVID-19. At this point, we appear to be having a more technical, in the

weeds conversation, about specific aspects of how we might reopen, but we have not had a broad conversation. She is happy to have all the expert guidance we can have, but she just wonders if we need to have the broader conversation first, and come back with those broader recommendations opposed to talking about individual items. Secondly, in addition, to the issues Mr. Brown raised, one of the things we need to think about is that we do not just serve people at 2020 Hampton Street. We have staff and team members that interact with public, at many different levels. We also have millage agencies that might be looking to us for guidance.

Mr. Livingston stated the intent was to talk about the partnership, and what the partnership could bring.

Ms. McBride inquired, once we get the protocols in place, how do we determine when we are ready to open back up.

Dr. Ossmann responded the White House came out with some general guidance in April regarding the plan for opening up. Most of the States have proceeded at a somewhat different rate, including South Carolina. One of the gating criteria that was laid out, and is still appropriate, is that you would have a two-week decrease in the number of new cases and/or decrease in influenza-like illnesses. The hospitals would have appropriate surge capacity in place, and you have testing to test all of the First Responders and healthcare providers that need it. South Carolina's epidemic curve has been interesting. In April, we assumed that it would peak and then start to quickly fall off. What we have seen is that it peaked and dropped off a little bit, and has remained relatively flat, with a slight downward trend. All of the other aspects of the gating are in place, meaning you have appropriate levels of testing at the health system, and for any of the First Responders that require it. You have adequate PPE and bed capacity in the health system. You have not had a significant drop off, over the last two weeks, but you have had a flattening. That is probably a reassuring sign.

Ms. McBride inquired if the flattening is for South Carolina, or for Richland County.

Dr. Ossmann responded it is for both.

Ms. McBride stated we have not been able to get the data, other than the numbers that are coming in each day, so she is not sure if that is Richland County, and why our data is so different from the other counties.

Dr. Ossmann stated what we have seen is, in Richland County, there was an initial peak that occurred in the second and third of April, and then a decrease. For the last four weeks, it has been relatively flat.

Ms. McBride inquired, as we plan our strategy, will we be looking at particular zip codes.

Dr. Ossman responded we do look at zip code level data from community testing, and we have the healthcare analytics team looking at that and figuring out where to test. He is not sure if that plays into opening. You would probably open based on the overall County data.

Ms. McBride stated there are certain areas where there is public housing, and the citizens do not have transportation. She inquired if there will be testing done in those areas to address those concerns.

Dr. Ossmann responded they partnered with DHEC to identify areas that are underserved. They are using all the large data they have access to in order to draw up lists. We then work with the National Guard and DHEC to make sure that we are distributing testing across the State. If there are specific concerns over an area that anyone feels is being missed, they are open to that, and trying to redirect testing to those particular areas.

Mr. Livingston stated, based on the discussion, what are some of the areas that PRISMA could collaborate with the County on.

Dr. Ossmann responded primarily helping with some subject matter expertise on the plans, being able to provide some decision making support, and being able to redirect testing where appropriate. Most of those things fall under the area of high level support to the County. The other areas they can be helpful in is assisting with the PPEs, through the EMD, reviewing protocols and being able to route people into the healthcare system, where appropriate.

Ms. Newton stated there are a lot of issues in the County. We have talked about reopening, testing, supply chains, and PPEs. From her perspective, she wants to be explicit that, as we look at what the needs are in the County, and the data, she would like for the partnership to say, “Based on the things we are seeing, we think there needs to be a lot more people wearing masks. Is there something the County can do to distribute masks?” She wants to make sure we are helping our citizens as much as we can, and to ensure that we do not inadvertently structure our partnership so that focuses primarily on the touch points that happen inside County buildings, but that we are also looking at using the data to figure out how we might do other things to help with COVID-19.

Mr. Brown stated one of the things they wanted to establish, from the committee standpoint, was a path forward, utilizing PRISMA in the way that Dr. Ossmann has communicated, and not limiting it to those particular things, because as a subject matter expert, we would be open to other areas they would bring to our attention. Based on our previous meetings, it would be appropriate to confirm the County would be taking an official step forward.

Ms. D. Myers thanked the Administrator and Dr. Ossmann. She is in favor of having some expertise guiding us on when we need to be asking people to wear face coverings, limit the number of people in places, and guide all of our constituent agencies and internal departments in who should be coming to work, and when. If we can provide some assistance to external entities that would great. She is in favor of moving forward with the assistance of PRISMA, as a partner and guide, in this important endeavor.

Mr. Livingston stated the focus needs to be on the data from the University of South Carolina, and helping us to understand citizen behavior, and what we need to do to influence citizen behavior.

Ms. D. Myers inquired if we are presenting this to Council, as a recommendation of the committee.

Mr. Livingston stated we will move forward with some form of collaboration. Mr. Brown will report out to full Council, in case Council members have some concerns.

4. **COVID-19 Relief Fund Update** – Mr. Brown stated there is a committee that has reviewed, and is in the process of going through to recommend specific awards for the small business side. On the grant side, there is also a committee that is going through the process. There were a few questions that came up with the submissions. There were people, as grantees, which submitted some requests that did not reflect direct assistance to individuals. They are working with the grant committee to ensure that any award, on the non-profit side, which are to be direct assistance related that they have the copious structure to reflect direct assistance. We expect some awards to be happening soon, and he will have a report out to tell you how many people we are awarding in the first round, and at what amount.

Ms. McBride inquired about the makeup of the committee.

Mr. Brown responded the non-profit committee is made up of TetraTech, and internal and external components. On the small business side, you have a similar committee set up like the discretionary grant program.

Ms. McBride inquired if it is possible for us to get a report on TetraTech, and what they are doing.

Ms. D. Myers inquired if the small business grants that are being made have to be voted on by Council.

Mr. Brown responded that he was not aware there was an additional vote process. His understanding was that the grant program was set up in the same way the discretionary grant program was set up. He does not believe that process involves a vote of Council.

Ms. D. Myers stated Council takes action on the discretionary grants during the budget process.

Mr. Brown stated that was not in the program that was submitted.

Ms. D. Myers stated, during that time, she specifically asked if it would come back for a vote, and Mr. Walker recused himself. She does not know how we can disburse money without a vote from the people that are supposed to be authorizing disbursements.

Mr. Brown stated we need to add to the process the potential awards. They would then come back to Council, and Council would determine whether or not to submit those awards.

Ms. D. Myers stated it would be similar to when we approve contracts. The individual allocations have to have a vote of Council, so that checks can be authorized.

Ms. McBride stated it would be more like the discretionary grant process where the individual amounts are provided for Council to vote on.

Mr. Brown stated we have not awarded any funds, at this point, so we have not acted outside of that, so we can amend the process.

Ms. D. Myers inquired if they have a list of awardees that could be brought before Council at today's Council meeting, so we do not hold up the money being distributed.

Mr. Brown responded he has not received a list of potential awardees. A part of the delay was that they assisted individuals with applying for the funds.

5. **Adjournment** – The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:05 PM.