

“Have Faith” Initiative

The Faith Community’s Response to the COVID-19 Outbreak

Notes from 12/17/20 meeting (via Zoom)

Greg Burris opened the meeting and thanked all for participating on behalf of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Community Partnership of the Ozarks, United Way of the Ozarks, the City of Springfield, and Greene County. There were 43 participants on the Zoom call.

Co-Chair Rev. Bob Roberts reminded the audience that our next meeting would be on January 7. He then introduced Greg Horton, CEO Integrity Home Care & Hospice. Greg shared the story of the plane crash he survived six years ago this month. Greg then opened in prayer.

Harold Bengsch, Greene County Commissioner, provided a CARES funding update — Of interest, as of December 17, the following amounts were allocated:

Nonprofits - \$5,000,000

Tax-support Entities - \$6,500,000

Reserves - \$2,000,000

There will be a community report prepared soon that will provide spending breakdowns and testimonies of the safety net provided by this funding. There is another CARES spending allocation being discussed in Washington. Sadly, the needs won’t be gone on January 1.

Harold shared that this was his final Have Faith Initiative meeting since he will retire at the end of the year. Rev. Roberts and others thanked Harold for his many years of community service.

Clay Goddard, Director of the Springfield Greene County Health Department, shared that he first met Harold 25 years ago when he started at the Health Department as an intern. He said that Harold has been a wonderful role model for him and one of the biggest influences in his life.

Clay then shared his Health Department report. The disease peaked on December 11 as a result of Thanksgiving gatherings. It has since leveled out, but 215 cases a day is still a lot. Hospitalizations have fallen off a bit with 170 today. Of that number, 33 are on ventilators, and 80 are Greene County residents. The Pfizer vaccine has arrived, and Moderna’s vaccine should arrive soon.

Clay requested help from the Faith Community. There will be vaccine-hesitant people. That comes from a lack of trust in government, marginalized individuals, and those who worry about vaccine safety or if it’s an experiment. He would like our group’s help in advocating and becoming ambassadors for the vaccine. His staff will gladly meet with you to discuss any concerns you might have before talking to your

membership. His department is assembling a grassroots campaign to help get the word out. Contact Clay Goddard at cgoddard@springfieldmo.gov or Cora Scott at cscott@springfieldmo.gov.

Q: The Venues church recently suspended in-person services due to the increase in positive cases. As we begin to turn the corner in the coming weeks/months, is there a specific measurement or target you would recommend we monitor to consider resuming in-person services at some point in the future?

A: They are watching hospitalizations. But as more people get the vaccine, you will feel more comfortable resuming. He believes we need to get the economy before moving away from masking. He sees encouraging trends that we will be more comfortable by St. Patrick's Day. His department is also reviewing and developing metrics that will help.

Q: I've had questions from several members about how to get asymptomatic testing (concerned about exposures). Guidance on the best way forward for folks who cannot afford the \$150 tests from CVS and similar?

A: Clay asked that people call 874-1211 for more information on affordable testing options. Testing is currently reserved for those with symptoms.

Q: Clay, one of my questions was how we, as faith leaders, can share useful information about the vaccine and encourage this process.

A: Cara Irwin is coordinating the communications strategy. She will be on a future call.

Cora Scott, Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement, then provided an update. City Council approved \$1,100,000 to provide aid to the homeless. There are now five tiers of sheltering:

1. Regular overnight shelters that keep guests properly distanced.
2. COVID prevention shelters in hotels. These are for those at high-risk to get COVID.
3. Cold weather shelters. These are stand-alone shelters that are opened when the temperature drops to a certain threshold. They are excited that a few new cold weather shelters will be opening soon.
4. COVID quarantine shelters for those that have been exposed. There is currently one individual at Eden Village 2. They will find additional spots on a case-by-case need.
5. COVID isolation for homeless individuals that have tested positive. Thankfully, because of the prevention measures, there have only been two individuals that needed this assistance.

More support is needed for all those tiers.

Cora's department is working on messaging to address vaccine concerns. She then shared the story about an individual who had harassed many in the City leadership about his resistance to masking, but he has now come out in support after hearing that former City Council member Tom Bieker had passed away.

Bill Hennessey, with Mercy, shared that the arrival of the vaccine has been a tremendous boost to their coworkers! Bishop Rice joined for a blessing of the hands of our nurses and teams; this was a very powerful and moving moment. Mercy has vaccinated nearly 500 at this point. Folks are enthusiastic and upbeat! Many of their physician leaders sent a note to coworkers to share the importance of taking the vaccine.

Q: Is there any list of volunteers churches can tap into making their facilities available as cold weather shelters?

A: Please contact Amanda Stadler with Community Partnership, astadler@cpozarks.org, who is coordinating shelter volunteers.

Hope Church will be opening the month of January for cold weather shelter for 25 men but can use more volunteers if you have members of your church that wish to help.

Janet Dankert introduced Justin Lockhart with Community Partnership of the Ozarks to talk about the rent moratorium and evictions. Justin then explained that if you are working for minimum wage in Springfield, you must work 47 hours per week to afford the fair market rate for a one-bedroom apartment (using 30% housing to income metrics.) The Centers for Disease Control passed a moratorium in September that covered individuals until December 31. This was only related to evictions for non-payment, and the full rent would still be due. Late fees can also be charged. Now, new people are asking for help that have never asked before. Legal Services is also getting more requests for assistance to fight evictions. Starting in early January, there could be a crisis. There is the Missouri Rental Arrears Program, where landlords can request funding for back-due rent, all the way back to April. Landlords then must sign an agreement to not evict for 120 days. Additional legislation may help.

Here are the links that Justin referenced

[Household Pulse Survey:](#)

[MHDC Missouri Rental Arrears Program](#)

Feel free to contact him if you have questions jlockhart@cpozark.org

Greg Burris introduced Springfield Police Chief Paul Williams to give an update on his department. Chief Williams said he would focus on three areas: COVID, Crime, and Cameras.

COVID

Officers have been keeping their exposures down, and so far, they have had only a few officers out at a time. The officers are following protocols when responding to emergencies. They have stopped group gatherings, including neighborhood watch meetings. They did start a police academy with the proper protocols.

The disease has impacted the Investigative and Civilian staff. The main station was shut down for a few days. Some employees had relaxed their masking, but they are now following Health Department protocols.

In addition to all those measures, the City Council passed the Masking Ordinance. His officers have tried to educate the community. They created flyers, issued warnings, and fielded over 1400 calls from the public with concerns over masking. Now they have moved to enforcement. The number of complaints has dropped, and they have issued one ticket when someone refused to comply after being warned.

Crime

They are now tracking crime differently since there is now National Incident Reporting that classifies over 50 crime types. They have transferred to this new system, so there is very little historical data available other than homicides. This year, they have seen an increase in gun-related incidents, homicides, and traffic fatalities.

Cameras

For several years there has been a push for body cameras. After working through the logistics of expense and file storage, City Council approved funding in July. The cameras have arrived, and officers will attend training in late January. Be aware; officers will be recording every interaction with the public. Their policy will be posted online. The cameras hold citizens and officers more accountable. When people know they are being recorded, they behave better.

Springfield Police Department officers will be joining the United Way and other non-profit staff and board members to participate in upcoming Facing Racism classes with United Academy. This is made possible by a Diversity & Inclusion Grant from the Community Foundation of the Ozarks. Thanks, CFO!

Q: How is Officer Priebe?

A: The remodel of his home is almost done. He is adapting and doing well, and he is a strong person. Physically, he is at the point where it is as good as it's going to get, and he will be in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. He is an inspiration to many in his department.

In conclusion, Chief Williams asked that we remember the Walsh's this holiday season. Officer Walsh passed away earlier this year.

Co-Chair Rev. Jenn Simmons asked if there were any committee updates.

With the Food and Supply Drive Committee, Tom Ryan said that the sheltered homeless meals are ready to go. There are 4000 boxes, and that supply should last thru Spring.

Deanna Carpenter with the Coming Together in Faith Committee shared that the Have Faith Initiative Healthcare Heroes card drive is still underway. They did partner with

KOLR 10. The first batch of 3000 cards will be delivered to Mercy and Cox on Friday, December 18. There will be another opportunity to drop off cards; visit <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409054EA8AA2BA6F49-cards> to learn more.

Josh Zahn then shared how his church, East Sunshine Church of God, participated, with a simple drive-thru event. To see the video, visit https://drive.google.com/file/d/1q-5Nq2agYZhrQli0fxRg5HzwC_pAxe78/view.

Emily Bowen-Marler, Brentwood Christian Church, closed in prayer.