

## **BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' EMERGENCY MEETING MINUTES**

The Pima County Board of Supervisors met remotely in emergency session through technological means at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 24, 2021. Upon roll call, those present and absent were as follows:

Present: Sharon Bronson, Chair  
Adelita S. Grijalva, Vice Chair  
Rex Scott, Member  
Dr. Matt Heinz, Member  
Steve Christy, Member

Also Present: Chuck Huckelberry, County Administrator  
Lesley Lukach, Civil Deputy County Attorney  
Julie Castañeda, Clerk of the Board  
Charles Lopiccolo, Sergeant at Arms

### **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **2. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments for the record.

### **COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

### **3. Transportation Contract for Asylum Seekers**

Discussion/Action regarding transportation contract for Asylum seekers.

(Clerk's Note: See attached verbatim for Minute Item No. 3, for discussion and action on this item.)

### **4. Federal Point of Distribution**

Discussion/Action regarding Federal Point of Distribution.

(Clerk's Note: See attached verbatim for Minute Item No. 4, for discussion and action on this item.)

### **5. COVID-19 Update**

Discussion/Action regarding COVID-19 Update.

(Clerk's Note: See the attached verbatim related to this item. Verbatim was necessary due to the nature and evolving circumstance related to COVID-19.)

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

As there was no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

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CHAIR

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
CLERK

## COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

### 3. Transportation Contract for Asylum Seekers

Discussion/Action regarding transportation contract for Asylum seekers.

Verbatim

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SB: Chair Bronson  
SC: Supervisor Christy  
AG: Supervisor Grijalva  
MH: Supervisor Heinz  
RS: Supervisor Scott  
CH: Chuck Huckelberry, County Administrator  
JC: Julie Castañeda, Clerk of the Board

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SB: Let us proceed with Item 4 Transportation Contract for Asylum Seekers. Mr. Huckelberry did you want to inform us on this?

CH: Chair Bronson, Members of the Board, I have provided written communication as of yesterday on this subject. Most immediate need is to get authorization from the Board to enter into appropriate transportation contracts to transport asylum seekers who are released in Ajo, Arizona, to the Casas Alitas facility. We have been in communication with the Border Patrol now for probably a month and a half, with their concerns over potential significant increases and we are now beginning to see those. Absent Title 42 release, which would then have many of these asylum seekers flow through the ports of entry. These are individuals who are going around the ports of entry and they are mostly family units at this point in time. This is similar to and it is not at all comparable yet, to the surge that we experienced in April of 2019, where we received probably over 1,000 asylum seekers in the space of just a few days. These individuals who when we receive them, are processed through and by NGO's, mostly faith based organizations including the primary contractor that has been working on this, not under contract with us, but through their volunteer faith based services and that is Catholic Community Services. We, at the time of the surge in 2019, stood up both the Kino Event Center and the El Pueblo Community Center, as shelters. Those facilities are no longer available and they are now being used as either testing or vaccination centers, so they are not going to be available for any surge in asylum seekers. We also know that because of COVID-19 spacing restrictions the traditional capacity at Casa Alitas, which is about 300, is now reduced to probably in the range of about 70 and so we are limiting capacity there. We have potential housing issues on the forefront, but they are not as urgent as the transportation need right now. Just yesterday we received through Catholic Community Services at Casas Alitas Welcome Center approximately 72 individuals. They were 16 transported from Ajo, 40 coming

in a bus from Yuma, and 26 dropped off by ICE. So the most urgent problem we have is the transporting of those individuals from Ajo. The difficulty that we have had is that the notice is relatively short and sometimes it is significantly inaccurate with regard to the number of individuals being released. Kind of highlighted that discussion in the memorandum. I have had a communication just yesterday with the Tucson Border Patrol Sector Chief and I think we came to the conclusion that communications needs to improve significantly so that we have as much notice as possible in order to mobilize the assets in Ajo and to provide transportation. Right now those, the primary contact in Ajo is the International Sonoran Desert Alliance non-profit. They have been helpful. The issue that we continually have is the notice of how many are going to be released versus how many actually get released. I think last Sunday we were told 60 would be released, but 33 were released so that is a significant difference. We have been told today so far that none will be released, so hopefully things are improving in that arena. I think we also included some information that in April of 2019, the Border Patrol and ICE were directly transporting individuals to Casas Alitas. This new policy has been implemented apparently this year '21, and apparently it is part of what they call an anti-degradation law. We are trying to sort out what that is. That is the reason they cannot transport anywhere beyond 35 miles of the point of apprehension. So, that is why they are releasing in Ajo. We expect the same thing to happen in the near future in Three Points and to our surrounding counties the same issue is happening. These releases first started in Yuma. Yuma has no sheltering capacity; and therefore, I believe the city of Yuma was paying for the transportation from Yuma to Casas Alitas. So far Casas Alitas has been able to keep up with the flow. Even with the COVID-19 restrictions, but if Title 42 is lifted, and it has been extended now to April 21st, we would expect those volumes to go up significantly. Finally, just to touch on the issue of COVID-19, in our conversations with the Border Patrol they do not routinely test those individuals for COVID-19 unless they are obviously symptomatic. For that reason, we have provided the rapid Binax testing to our nonprofits to ensure that every individual taken in is tested. We have not had very many positives, except for yesterday and I think yesterday we had three positives at Casas Alitas in transport, a grandmother, a mother, and a daughter. The mother and the daughter are now in a hotel shelter for COVID isolation. The grandmother when medically checked by Casas Alitas, which is a requirement on entry, had a blood ox, I think, content of about 68% and was immediately transported to the hospital and I understand is now in the ICU. So, we have got some communications with the Border Patrol as to how that happened, why it happened. Our public health staff is going to follow up with the Border Patrol. That should not have occurred. So, that is the kind of challenges we are facing. We will continue to apply for and we believe that we are eligible and I have met with the Acting Region 9 Director, Director of FEMA, for full reimbursement of the transportation cost. The discussion we are having is that there is an interpretation that the public assistance package out of FEMA would provide for housing for COVID positive individuals, but it would not provide for emergency housing if individuals were required to be housed because of a

lack of shelter space due to COVID-19 spacing. We are having those discussions through our federal lobbyists, with the appropriate agencies, as well as the delegation, to see if we can get some clarity on that. So we can, at least if we have significant surges provide emergency housing for those who are required to be housed because of COVID-19 spacing, but are not COVID positive. The only item that I think I need authority from the Board is to be able to enter into the contracts for transportation and we will probably enter into more than one. So that we will have the flexibility to respond to the very erratic release of asylum seekers, both in Ajo and that is probably expected to be occurring in Three Points. With that, happy to answer any questions the Board would have.

SB: And just for the record. Excuse me. Just for the record Supervisor, looks like Supervisor Heinz has joined us. Now who was...

SB: ...and I have...

RS: Supervisor Scott.

SB: Supervisor Scott go ahead. But I am curious Mr. Huckelberry, do we have a profile of who is being released? Is it families? Single young adults? Or what do we?

CH: Madam Chair, at this time it is mostly all family units. It is husband, wife, children or wife and children.

SB: Thank you. Supervisor Scott.

RS: Madam Chair, I would like to move that we authorize the County administration to enter into appropriate transportation contracts to transport asylum seekers from any border area within Pima County to Casas Alitas.

AG: I will second.

SB: Supervisor Grijalva seconded. We have a motion and a second, any discussion?

RS: Madam Chair, I think any time the federal border policy, regardless of the party in the White House, has implications for the public health and safety of not just asylum seekers but Pima County residents, that we have an obligation to act, to protect public health and safety. I would hope that voting for this motion is not seen as an endorsement of federal border policy any more than a vote against it would be seen as denunciation of federal border policy. Rather, I see this as a motion made in recognition of our obligation to protect public health and safety of our residents and to ensure humane treatment of asylum seekers.

SB: Thank you Supervisor Scott. And who, was it Supervisor Christy?

SC: Yes, yes.

SB: Supervisor Christy.

SC: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think the County Administrator outlined most thoroughly and eloquently the reasons behind why we should not authorize this transportation agreement. This is a crisis of epic proportions that is and has been caused by the current administration in Washington D.C., and it is the current administration in Washington D.C. that should be addressing and aiding this situation, not Pima County. There is absolutely no logical or physical way that Pima County can adjust or react to this extensive problem that is just going to get worse. We have seen all of the issues along the border, they are getting worse. Even the press is not allowed to go in and see it. There are a number of issues that have been pointed out why this should not be included. We were talking about COVID testing issues. We are talking about availability at any asylum facility, such as Casa Alitas due to COVID restrictions and social distancing and mandates there. There is not adequate sheltering in the motels and the hotels that could accommodate these individuals. All that would do is create an extensive health problem and after many, many months of our community working diligently with the mandates to try to bring our COVID transmission and infection rate down, which we are doing dramatically. Now, we are faced with this situation that could only cause more problems as seen by the admission into the hospital of some of the asylum seekers. This is not a County issue, this is a Federal issue. The Federal Government should be the one driving this and at the very least, the NGO's and social service entities, the faith based communities who are administering aid and shelter to the current asylum seekers, they should be the ones arranging the transportation. They should be the ones paying for the transportation, this is part of their agreement. It would seem to me to shelter and aid these folks and there is really no set guarantee that we will get reimbursed. We did get reimbursed for all of the modifications and expenses related to the renovation of Casa Alitas, but it took many, many months. The same thing I feel with all the distraction and the chaos that is happening now, is that our request for reimbursement for the travel contracts will be lost in the shuffle and delayed and denied. I think this is a bigger problem than Pima County is able to handle or should handle. It needs to go back to the Federal Government. It is their fault. They need to address it and correct it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

AG: Chair Bronson?

SB: Supervisor Grijalva.

AG: Yeah, so thank you, Mr. Huckelberry for going over the whole process and what happened in April 2019 under a previous administration. This is a situation that requires all of us to put political parties aside and understand that this is a health crisis. That we potentially can help mitigate by

transporting people, by making sure that they get the services that they need. This is not an endorsement one way or the other. I do not think that this is a crisis at this point, but I do feel like we have communicated both at the Federal level and at the State level, with the situation that we are in. I do agree that this is something that we have to do. Because otherwise as indicated you know the Border Patrol can only transport them so far. So, they are going to leave them in different communities in Pima County and so then it is a County issue. Regardless of whether we agree with the situation or not, it is a County issue. I would rather have people assessed for health concerns whether they have COVID, I mean all of these mitigations that we put into place are things that we have to do, we have to continue to do. I believe we have to treat people humanely. Thank you for highlighting that most of the people that are coming are families. My understanding is 70,000 single men were turned away and so we are really talking about children and so if a child came up to you and said I need help, I mean, the only humane thing to do is to provide that help. I am happy to support the item, I thank you for being proactive and bringing it forward early, and I look forward to having more conversations about how we are going to address the other housing situations that are going to come up as a result. Thanks.

SB: Thank you Supervisor. Any other discussions? Let us do a roll call vote.

JC: Supervisor Christy?

SC: No.

JC: Supervisor Grijalva?

AG: Yes.

JC: Supervisor Heinz? I am sorry, was that a yes?

MH: Yes.

JC: Supervisor Scott?

RS: Yes.

JC: Chair Bronson?

SB: Aye. By your vote of 4-1 motion carries.

## COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

### 4. Federal Point of Distribution

Discussion/Action regarding Federal Point of Distribution.

Verbatim

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SB: Chair Bronson  
SC: Supervisor Christy  
AG: Supervisor Grijalva  
MH: Supervisor Heinz  
RS: Supervisor Scott  
CH: Chuck Huckelberry, County Administrator  
JC: Julie Castañeda, Clerk of the Board

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SB: Moving on to Item 5, Federal Point of Distribution. Mr. Huckelberry.

CH: Chair Bronson, Members of the Board, we were made aware of approximately two weeks ago, an offer by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to establish a Federal vaccination POD in Pima County. We worked with the Federal and State officials to identify an area that we felt we needed to locate such and that would have been in two distinct areas, at the Kino Event Center and the El Pueblo Community Center. Those were targeted primarily due to the census tract and zip code information regarding Hispanic or minority populations. I think I have included in the material that data and information on a census tract as well as a zip code basis. Federal PODs come with their own vaccine supply and their own staffing, and so they are really something that gets added to the vaccination capacity of a particular community or a state. In the case of our discussions, the Federal POD would be in place approximately six to eight weeks. They would bring 6,000 vaccinations a day into the community in addition to the State's allocation and our sub-allocation from the State. Therefore, we had the ability to have for six weeks the Pfizer vaccine, at 6,000 a day, and the discussion with the Federal officials, was for an additional two weeks with the Johnson & Johnson. If you, think of 6,000 a day, that is 42,000 additional vaccines per week. We are presently, in our supply, getting in the range of 32 to 38,000 a week and so this was an ability to double the vaccine supply to the community for a period of 8 weeks. Then if we then understand that the Pfizer takes two shots to be complete and the Johnson & Johnson one, that was, essentially means our ability to vaccinate another 210,000 individuals within the community. It was a significant offer. We were prepared to fully accept it, to provide any and all support that was necessary. I believe the State has indicated they would decline the offer from the Federal Government. We still believe that it is necessary in the community simply because it greatly accelerates our ability to achieve what is typically known in



the public health field as herd immunity. By reaching herd immunity we can begin to bring the entire economy out of the doldrums that it has been in during the pandemic. We view this as both a public health benefit as well as a general economic benefit to Pima County and Southern Arizona. We have in the Resolution, again we have asked that if the Board approves the Resolution, to ask the Governor, once again, to reconsider. In a conversation with the managers last Monday, we proposed that the Mayors and the Chair of the Board, send a letter to the Governor again, again asking him to reconsider. That has been done. Late last night, I guess around 5:30, I received a response from the person that we were dealing with, which was the Acting Administrator, Region 9 of FEMA. I provided that as additional information to the Board, where they discuss in some detail, the issues that have been raised by the State as a reason for not accepting the Federal POD and if you read their letter, it is a polite way of saying that their stated reasons, at least publicly, are not accurate. So with that, I would be happy to answer any questions. Another issue that we also believe it is necessary to accelerate the vaccination, is the now presence of, and I believe either Dr. Garcia or Dr. Cullen can talk about, the UK variant. I think they call it 117 or 118, that they recently found in I think two different locations, with several cases. So again, the faster we can get people vaccinated, the better we will, chance we will have at stopping the variants from becoming predominant or causing additional infections, hospitalizations and death within the community. The action that I am asking the Board to take, is to approve the Resolution. We will then, with the direction to the Clerk about the distribution of the Resolution, is continue to ask our Federal Lobbyist, our Congressional Delegation, to address the issues with Federal agencies, as well as our Congressional Delegation, asking them to consider if the State continues to refuse to reconsider or turn down the Federal POD, ask for an exception. Which is that the County would be the local sponsoring agency of the Federal POD. That is probably difficult to have happen, but it is not beyond the realm of possibility. With that, I can answer any questions.

SB: Just a quick procedural question. The Resolution does not have a number. Madam Clerk, I assume you will assign it a number?

JC: Madam Chair, the Resolution No. is 2021-8.

SB: Dash 8? Okay, that is what I needed. Okay.

AG: Chair Bronson?

SB: Was that Supervisor Grijalva?

AG: Yes. I would like to move the item.

SB: I will second.

SB: We have a motion and a second to move the item. Any further discussion?

SC: Madam Chair? Supervisor Christy here.

SB: Supervisor Christy.

SC: I had noticed, and maybe this is just pure speculation, but it is also kind of a gut feeling of observation over the last few weeks. There seems to be some underlying current of irritation and acrimony obviously between the State of Arizona and Pima County, and I do not think either entity is being completely forthcoming as to the rationale behind why this acrimony exists. On the State side, I do not understand quite why they are proposing that Pima County should not receive FEMA help and the POD and the vaccination. If there is some underlying reason? If Pima County is not playing by the rules that the State has set? There is the old saying about "whoever has the gold makes the rules." Well Pima County is not making the rules in this situation. It seems perhaps from the State side, that Pima County is making its own rules and Pima County is not in the driver's seat in this issue. On the other hand, I think Pima County has done as much as they possibly can to accommodate vaccine distribution, but it seems strange that why Pima County is not more cooperative with the State of Arizona. Particularly when no other county has had this kind of acrimony and irritating relationship between the State and those counties. Now Maricopa County did at one time a little while ago and that was resolved. But no other county seems to be having this kind of conflict with the State that Pima County is and I think there has got to be some underlying reason here that both parties, the State and Pima County, are not being fully transparent and divulging to the public. Now having said that, the FEMA letter particularly this morning, that I was able to see that Mr. Huckelberry referenced, took the position of basically overcoming all of the objections that the State of Arizona had by denying the FEMA POD to come to Pima County. All of the issues that the State said Pima County should not have the POD, were denied by FEMA and I thought that was a very significant element. So consequently, I am in favor of anything from anywhere that brings more vaccines for anyone, into Pima County and the situation with bringing in the FEMA POD means more vaccines for our county and I would imagine that would preserve and free up our current allocations of vaccine that could be better distributed throughout the county once that FEMA shipment arrives. I would just try to urge Pima County and the State of Arizona to find some sort of accommodation between the two of you, that we can stop this kind of competition as to who is in charge here because that is a perfect example of why government should not be involved in what by now should be a routine procedure, and that is vaccine distribution. Now on the other side, I will support this resolution, to continue to request that FEMA set up a POD in Pima County and provide a very large shipment of vaccines that would enhance and supplement the current vaccines that are now entering Pima County. Thank you Madam Chair.

RS: Madam Chair?

SB: Thank you Supervisor. Supervisor Scott.

RS: Madam Chair, I just wanted to remind my colleagues that I am our representative to the Legislative Policy Committee of the County Supervisors Association. I meet with my colleagues from the other 14 counties every week and I can assure Supervisor Christy that the concerns expressed by our colleagues from the other counties about the State's role with equitable distribution of vaccine allocation, is widely held. Most especially by the representatives of the rural counties. I appreciate that Supervisor Christy is going to support this Resolution, I intend to support it as well. As the Administrator told us in his memorandum, the setting up of a Federal POD could lead to the immunization of 200,000 Pima County residents beyond what the County PODs are able to accomplish. That will especially benefit minority and disadvantaged communities. I hope that the FEMA Director's rebuttal of the three reasons that Dr. Christ and Governor Ducey gave for turning down the Federal POD, is an indication of what action we might expect if the Governor and the State Health Director do not rescind their wrong-headed decision. I hope that FEMA will also look at the fact that every Mayor in Pima County, regardless of party affiliation, joined the Chair in supporting this Resolution in having a Federal POD set up in Pima County and I hope that everybody who has influence on this decision considers that the priority has to be getting shots in arms. That is what this is going to accomplish for Pima County and for State Government to stand in the way of that, is just completely reckless and irresponsible. I hope that we can expect the right response from our Federal partners if our State partners do not rescind their original decision. Thank you Madam Chair.

SB: Thank you Supervisor. Any other discussion?

AG: Super, Chair Bronson?

SB: Supervisor Grijalva.

AG: I was on, listening in on a call with all of our congressional delegates, well not all of them, but all of the democratic candidates and they were all expressing the same frustration and concern about the, allowing our counties to be able to reach out directly to Federal assistance. Because that is one of the reasons why the additional support and funding that is coming now with the Rescue Act, is coming directly to counties and cities. Because you know, in order to for, and we are not the only state that is in this situation, but to refuse the assistance for an additional 210,000 people to get fully vaccinated, is irresponsible. I am happy to support it and I would like to ask anybody who has any influence with any lobbying groups, any organizations that are frustrated, small business organizations, realtors, reach out to your lobbyist and let the Governor know that you really want this in Pima County. If they do not need it in Maricopa, that is okay but we need it here and I would like to support this.

SB: Thank you Supervisor. Any other comments? Are there, there is a motion on the floor and it is regarding Resolution 2021-8. If there are no objections, motion carries unanimously. Thank you all and I think this is one of our very few unanimous votes. I really do thank all of my colleagues.

DRAFT

## COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

### 5. COVID-19 Update

Discussion/Action regarding COVID-19 Update.

Verbatim

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SB: Chair Bronson  
SC: Supervisor Christy  
AG: Supervisor Grijalva  
MH: Supervisor Heinz  
RS: Supervisor Scott  
CH: Chuck Huckelberry, County Administrator  
FG: Francisco Garcia, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer, Health and Community Services  
TC: Theresa Cullen, Director, Health Department

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SB: With that let us move on to the COVID update, the next item on the Agenda, Item 6.

CH: Chair Bronson, Members of the Board, we really do not have much other than what is already contained in the memorandum. The only issue is, that we are, and I have indicated in the memorandum, talking about dropping the eligibility to 16 and above with the caveat that the individual must have a chronic health condition in order to be eligible. This continues our pattern of looking at those who are most susceptible, to have priority in vaccination. That is really all I have. Perhaps Dr. Cullen or Dr. Garcia have more information that they would like to share with you and I do not have anything further.

RS: Madam Chair?

SC: You are muted Sharon.

SB: I see that. Supervisor Scott.

RS: Thank you. Mr. Huckelberry, you also said in your memo that we are going to open up the County PODs to essential workers next week. For essential workers to visit a County POD, do they just need an I.D. and some affirmation of their job position?

CH: Chair Bronson and Supervisor Scott, I think the registration now will contain the identification of essential worker and that is really about all they need to do.

RS: Then a follow-up question. In a memorandum that you sent to us on March 12th, that included some, an additional memorandum from Mr. Sullivan with Community Workforce and Development, he indicated that 1,800 of the 4,000 people on the waiting list for rental assistance had been contacted. I just wondered how much progress we have made in the 12 days since then, getting to the other 2,200 people who have been on that waiting list?

CH Supervisor, Chair Bronson, Supervisor Scott, you know there is one thing that slipped my mind when we talked yesterday. I will find out that answer today and get it to you. But I know they were contacting people, I just do not know the number yet. But I will talk to Dan Sullivan and find out and let everybody know.

RS: Thank you Mr. Huckelberry.

SB: You are going to send out information to all Board Members about the status at this point right, correct Mr. Huckelberry?

CH: Chair Bronson, yes, I will do that.

SB: Thank you.

AG: Chair Bronson?

SB: Supervisor Grijalva.

AG: So can Dr. Garcia just go over where the County is as far as who are eligible at our PODs, just so we can publically say that?

FG: Chair Bronson, Supervisor Grijalva, so what our Health Department is proposing to do is, tomorrow to issue an updated public health advisory which officially expands the eligibility in Pima County beyond what we have to date. The final wording of that public health advisory is still being finalized however, it will say something to the effect that anyone who is 55 years of age or older, is automatically eligible. It will talk about how anyone who has a high risk medical condition or disability, or is experiencing homelessness, living in a congregate setting or receiving in-home, long term or long term care, is eligible, beginning at 16 years of age and up. Anybody who is working in any of the essential services areas and we will have a detailed list, would also be eligible. Please understand, and I know that you already do understand, that what is, continues to be our greatest challenge, is the amount of vaccine that we have on, in-hand. We can open up the eligibility criteria to everyone; however, the constrained vaccine supply that we have, really is going to cause a challenge for us. However, in keeping with what the State is doing, in keeping with where we believe vaccine availability will be in two and three weeks, we thought it was most responsible to update that public health advisory. Again, Dr. Cullen is in the process of updating that for tomorrow.

- AG: I do want to say congratulations to Pima County for their National, the National recognition we received on getting the vaccine to underserved communities. I think that that was really, I appreciated the acknowledgement because it has been a real effort on the part of Pima County. So to get National recognition for that, I think that if we had more vaccine we would have been number one and not number three, but that is just my thought.
- SB: I agree and I was going to say the same thing but you said it better than I could have. So thank you Supervisor.
- SC: Madam Chair? This is Supervisor Christy.
- SB: Supervisor Christy.
- SC: I would like to speak to an item that we discussed on the COVID issue at the last meeting. I presented to the Board a motion to lift and remove the face mask requirement of the citizens of Pima County and it died for lack of a second. But one thing that did come out of that discussion, was the questions that I asked about what would it take data-wise and science-wise and numbers-wise, to officially remove and remand and lift the County facemask wearing requirement? Two individuals responded that that would happen, that the facemask requirement would be lifted, when we reached quote "herd immunity." I would like to speak today and discuss all things "herd immunity." Mr. Huckelberry said that was where he felt that the facemask requirement could be lifted and it was supported by Dr. Cullen. So, is Dr. Cullen available? I would like to ask Dr. Cullen to explain and describe what is in fact herd immunity? What does it mean? When do we reach it? What says we are going to reach it? What scientific data is backed up to say we have reached herd immunity? And what is the process that will make all of the information available so we can track it to determine when herd immunity exists? So, if Dr. Cullen could just give us kind of a broad spectrum of all of the issues that would lead up to removing the facemask mandate via herd immunity?
- TC: Thank you. I am sorry for that echo, Chairwoman Bronson.
- SC: Good morning Dr. Cullen. Thank you for being here.
- TC: Good morning. I want to clarify what I said last time because I think what I said was, herd immunity plus the caseload. The caseload that we have referred to in the past has been what is based on our dashboard, and that would be when we got to green and green positivity. I am looking at it right now. Number of new cases less than 10 cases per 100,000 for two weeks in a row. what that would mean is on average, we would have that number of cases, and we are currently around 65 cases per 100,000, fluctuates a little, but that was the most recent report I had.

- SC: So that, pardon me for interrupting, but the caseload issue, the caseload numbers, are those that would be driving the lifting of the facemask? Or would it be herd immunity?
- TC: If I recollect correctly, Supervisor Christy, I had added to what Mr. Huckelberry had said about herd immunity and said in addition, there would be a caseload factor that would figure into the lifting of the masks. I remember saying that, I am hoping it got captured in the notes somewhere, so I am taking the second one now, which is what would be the caseload number. Which is this green moving to green in the cases over two consecutive weeks, which is on the dashboard.
- SC: Do you mean infections? Or hospitalizations? Or positive testing or what?
- TC: Thank you for asking me to clarify Supervisor Christy. It is new cases as diagnosed by positive, new positive PCR testing.
- SC: That determination is based on what numbers?
- TC: The State. The State reports those numbers.
- SC: You mentioned what, 10 cases per 100,000?
- TC: Yeah, Supervisor Christy, yes, the number of new cases which is less than 10 cases per 100,000 for two weeks in a row. Remember we have this funky 13-day delay.
- SC: Okay, so that is one element of lifting the facemask requirement, is that equation of caseloads. The second thing is, and I do not mean to stop you if you have more so say about the caseload, but I am interested in the herd immunity. What that means and how do we know we have gotten to herd immunity and what data is backing that up?
- TC: Yeah, Supervisor Christy and that is actually why I added that to the initial response because herd immunity is difficult to predict. As you may be aware, the number keeps changing depending upon which, which advisor is making a comment. So right now CDC has, and it is a range, CDC has indicated between 75 and 80 percent of people have gained immunity in a community. And people can gain immunity either from having had the disease, but you have to have had the disease in the last 90 days, and/or been immunized. As we are aware, 16 and younger are not eligible for immunity right now because they cannot be immunized, they can have immunity through the disease. So it is it, that is a moving target which is why I believe the case number, because that is not a moving target and is measureable, is a better indication of when we, at the Health Department, would recommend the lifting of the mask mandate.



- SC: So the case number overtakes and supersedes the herd immunity issue? So herd immunity is not the indicator that will lift the facemask requirement?
- TC: In my opinion right, Supervisor Christy, because this is a metric that we have now been following for almost 7 months and most people in the community should be familiar with it.
- SC: I have to say that it is again confusing, as to which pathway the County is taking on this issue. We have talked extensively, two individuals from the last meeting, herd immunity, herd immunity, herd immunity. Now I am trying to get some ideas, some handle on what herd immunity means and now we are throwing back into the caseload issue is the predominant factor that drives the facemask requirement.
- SB: I think Mr. Huckelberry has something he wanted to add.
- SC: Please Mr. Huckelberry.
- CH: Yes, Chair Bronson and Supervisor Christy, I think I was the one who responded herd immunity and so I think you can use both factors. But let us just look at herd immunity and say how close are we to reaching herd immunity to where we would consider lifting the facemask requirement without even considering the caseload, you know, infections. I think you have heard Dr. Cullen say it is between 75 and 80 percent of individuals who had been basically vaccinated or had the disease. Right now we stand at about 25 percent vaccinated partially, maybe 30 percent, and if you think 10 percent have had the disease and you have got to remember that is within say 60 to 90 days, we are not even close yet. I think we are just going to be talking about the last thing that probably gets lifted, and I can get Dr. Cullen or Dr. Garcia to confirm this, is the facemask requirement. If we need 80 percent herd immunity, which is immunization or disease and we are standing at 25 to 30 percent, we still have a long way to go.
- SC: So how do we determine these 80 percent herd immunity? What is the collection of that data that we get to that figure? How do we know that we are reaching that figure? Other than the vaccination, that is very easy but the other factor of herd immunity I think is extremely nebulant and to determine what that number is and how we collect it. So how do we collect it?
- RS: Madam Chair? If I could add to this conversation because...
- SB: Let me see if Mr. Huckelberry had a response to Mr. Christy, Supervisor Christy first and then we will take your question.
- CH: Chair Bronson, no I think the identification of 80 percent herd immunity comes from the CDC and the public health and medical community, not the administrators.

SB: Yes. Supervisor Scott.

RS: Thank you. Just to follow-up on this dialogue, it parallels a similar conversation that is happening in Maricopa County, and I read about that today in the Arizona Republic. As an interesting aside, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors as a 4-1 Republican majority, so Supervisor Christy you and Supervisor Gallardo need to meet at some point to have an adult beverage and compare notes. But the Republic article was saying that three of the Maricopa County Supervisors want to keep their mask mandate in place until they get more advice from their public health officials, two of the Supervisors are ready to make it mandatory. But what was interesting to me and this is what I wanted to pose to either Dr. Cullen or Dr. Garcia, was in that same article, there was a quote from Will Humble who used to be the Arizona Department of Health Services Director, under I believe Governor Brewer, and is now the Executive Director of the Arizona Public Health Association. He said that any county should hold off on considering repealing their mask mandate until the Governor declares the public health emergency over and obviously, the Governor has not declared the public health emergency over. So my question to Dr. Cullen and Dr. Garcia, following up on Supervisor Christy's question, is, would you consider the Governor's declaration of the public health emergency being over as perhaps an impetus for us to come back to the issue of the County's mask mandate?

FG: Chair Bronson, Supervisor Scott, to begin with (inaudible) under what circumstances the Governor would lift that and what would go into his decision making in terms of declaring the emergency over, it is hard for me to imagine that is going to be something that happens in the very near future. Therefore, I think that the whole issue of mask mandates, which he delegated to the locals, I think will be on your lap to deal with into the, well into the summer. I do not see the emergency declaration being lifted anytime soon. I do think that, I do think that as we achieve higher and higher levels of vaccination in the seventy, seventy-five, eighty percent range, I do see that there is greater and greater comfort with loosening it up, these restrictions, and specifically the masking restrictions. But I do not know that, I do not know that, if you are asking when the Governor lifts that recommendation, that declaration can we all take off our masks? I am not sure about that quite honestly Supervisor Scott, because, because that may be a political as well as a public health decision about when that declaration is lifted. I think what I would do is, I would wait to see what the Federal guidance was with regards to masking and in terms of what we would do here locally.

RS: But you can see when Will Humble in his position says that might be a time for counties to consider that. That is some pretty profound and incredible testimony. Do you have any comment on what he said?

FG: No, I think, and you know, I have now looked at his comments in the Republic and I have not had a chance to talk to him in a little while. But I absolutely understand where he is coming from and I absolutely agree. I just

know that the decisions about lifting that emergency declaration will be complicated and will be colored by a lot of considerations beyond the public health. So, but yes, absolutely, it is hard for us to justify the continued mask mandate under the circumstance where the Governor says there is no more emergency. It would be very, very hard for us to continue to justify that.

SC: Madam Chair? One follow-up question regarding what Dr. Garcia just pointed out was, the Governor delegated the authority to make these proclamations to the jurisdictions and Pima County is the one that instituted the mask mandate and under questioning from the last meeting, Administrator Huckelberry acknowledged that the Board of Supervisors has within its power to lift the mask mandate basically anytime the Board of Supervisors so deems and so has the majority vote. Consequently, what I am getting from the Health Department is that, that the mask mandate issues such as the new case rates and the herd immunity, you are delegating those numbers to the State but it is up to the counties, Pima County in particular, who can actually determine whether or not to lift the mask mandate. Should we not be using your figures and your data and your information to provide to the Board the information that could lead to lifting the mask mandate and not waiting for the CDC or the Arizona Department of Health? This is our issue because it was delegated to us, we can lift it by a vote and we need to get the numbers from you, Dr. Garcia, and you, Dr. Cullen, to show us where we stand. Not diverting it up to the government or the Feds or the CDC or anything like that.

FG: Chair Bronson, Supervisor...

AG: (inaudible)

SB: I think Supervisor Grijalva had a question too. I think we did an institute of the mask mandate based on CDC recommendations. Is that correct Dr. Garcia?

FG: Chair Bronson, you are absolutely correct that our recommendations with regards to masks, universal mask mandate really are derived from the Federal recommendations. Supervisor Christy is absolutely correct that we do have the ability to lift or modify such a mandate. We are relying on our own data. Dr. Cullen just stated what the thresholds were for, at least in her mind, for elimination of that mask mandate. That is below 10 cases per 100,000 for two weeks as well as vaccine coverage in the seventy-five percent range.

SC: You do realize, you do realize and understand that there are legitimate sources that have stated that the infection rate has been less than 10 under the 100,000 rate for some weeks now. Just to throw that into the mix. I would encourage that we look at those numbers and all aspects of them while we are moving forward, if in fact we are going to be using Pima County Health Department's numbers because this is a Pima County issue.

SB: And then Supervisor Grijalva, you had a question?

AG: You know I do think that if, for us to talk about lifting the mandate we also need to be aware that there are different communities within Pima County that have been drastically impacted in a different way with COVID. Specifically District 2 and District 5 have been hit incredibly hard and so when we are talking about lifting a mandate that is going to affect all of Pima County, we need to take all of those factors into consideration. So, I am not in favor of lift, I mean I do think that lifting the mask mandate is one of the last things that we do as a community. I do think that the whole concept of herd immunity has many different data, there are a lot of different data sets that are going to go into that. So, I think that that is important to consider as well. So to harp on like one or the other, I do not think is a comprehensive look. I appreciate that the Pima County Health Department is looking to Federal and State guidance, but ultimately it is our decision and I do think that when we talk about that, we need to look at the entire community and ensure that every community within Pima County is, has the herd immunity and below the threshold for the spread of COVID. Because it is still happening, I do think that we are going to see some bumps with Spring Break kind of that. We also have Easter, Holy Week that people are going to get together too and so I think that it will be something that it continues to be cyclical. You know, with people that within the same family that are vaccinated, some are and some are not, we are going to see some spread there as well because, you know, the whole idea of trying to encourage people to get vaccinated is so we can come back to some sort of semblance of what life used to be like with families getting together and not having to isolate, but we are not going to get there until we have all of our community safe. Our 16 and under is a large percentage of our children, our babies you know in our communities and so I just think that the conversation about removing the mask mandate is premature considering where we are as a community.

SC: Madam Chair, I would just like to point out that, I thank Supervisor Grijalva for those comments. However, she mentioned that Districts 2 and 5 were the hardest hit. It is also those same districts and those communities that have been the focus of being put in the front of inoculations and vaccines. It is important to realize in this discussion regarding face masks, that 2 and 5 and other communities that are underserved are now the focus of where those vaccinations are going to be implemented and distributed. That should balance out any kind of conflict with the mask mandate because those communities will be getting the vaccinations sooner than many others. I just think it is important.

AG: No and I appreciate that but I do think that the reason why those communities have been selected is based on the spread of COVID and the lack of vaccine access. So I do not think that it is going to balance out in the end. I do think that the efforts are admirable but we are only talking about in some of these pop-ups, 500 vaccines in a community of you know, 5,000,

6,000 depending on how many you are, so how many community members are there. I do think that I appreciate the efforts, I would like to encourage us to do more of them. If we have you know, FEMA and other supports, I think that it is going to be really helpful for our community in order to get to the point where we reach herd immunity. But without those resources, we will be in this position for a number of months, minimally.

SC: Madam Chair, just for...

SB: We are coming up on, it is just past eleven. I promised we would only be at this for an hour so can we sort of start wrapping this up now Supervisor Christy?

SC: One last question, just for clarity. Could Drs. Garcia and Cullen please reiterate at what point the mask mandate will be determined to be lifted? What point and what factors and what criteria will the mask mandate be lifted in Pima County?

CH: Madam Chair, what I think we probably should do, is have a written communication from Dr. Cullen and Dr. Garcia, so we can answer this question definitively for one time. I do have, under the COVID-19 Update, an answer for Supervisor Scott, and it is 493 additional rental assistance applications have been processed and CIC is onboard, up and running so that should start to accelerate. That is all I have.

SB: Thank you Mr. Huckelberry. Alright, if there are no further points of discussion and if there are no objections this meeting...

SC: And really quickly, and when might we get that response from Drs. Cullen and Garcia?

CH: Chair Bronson and Supervisor Christy, I believe before the end of the week.

SC: Thank you very much.

SB: Thank you Supervisor Christy. If there is no further business and no objections this meeting stands adjourned. Thank you for joining us and we got a 5-0 vote for the first time in a while. So thank you all for that.