

VASHON PARK DISTRICT (VPD) BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MEETING MINUTES

Teleconference, 6:00 pm
DATE: Tuesday, August 31, 2021

Commissioners attending: Bob McMahon, Doug Ostrom, Josh Henderson, Abby Antonelis
 Staff attending: Elaine Ott-Rocheford

ISSUE	DISCUSSION AND OUTCOME	FOLLOW UP
Call To Order – Review Agenda	Abby called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and reviewed the agenda.	
Public Comment	None	
Vaccinations	<p>Elaine: At the last meeting, this was an agenda item Bob suggested. It didn't resolve anywhere. We discussed whether or not we had a responsibility to require vaccinations and whether or not we can, which we can. We discussed some of the issues on the island, particularly the Fire District situation. The reason I wanted to call this special meeting is that when I had my staff meeting on Friday, and this topic came up, they all expressed an interest in requiring vaccinations. And if they chose not to, require testing every two weeks. The reason they feel so strongly is it's a leadership thing for us – setting an example – but in particular with BARC, due to the number of unvaccinated kids, it's the right thing to do. Of all of our staff, 4 are unvaccinated – 2 in maintenance, a BARC attendant, and a housekeeper. Maintenance and housekeeping staff are probably not as critical, but even with maintenance, they have meetings in an enclosed space. He is uncomfortable with them not being vaccinated. He is higher risk and is particularly concerned about the Delta variant.</p> <p>Bob: Who attends the staff meetings?</p> <p>Elaine: It's our primary staff, so Eric, Shawn, Randy, Sue, Robin, and Cheryl. The managers act as representatives of their respective departments.</p> <p>Bob: And it was unanimous amongst that group that we require all staff be vaccinated or require testing every two weeks. Is two weeks often enough?</p> <p>Elaine: Maybe not.</p> <p>Bob: What's the standard?</p> <p>Eric: I heard that number but don't know where.</p> <p>Doug: Ideally, it should be every two hours. You can become infectious in a short period of time. Testing at any interval isn't the issue. People can infect each other in the office even if they have been tested recently. I don't think testing is a way out. You can't test every day.</p> <p>Bob: And on the island right now, you can't just get tested. You have to have been in contact with someone who is infected.</p> <p>Abby: You have to be symptomatic.</p> <p>Doug: There are different tests and different levels of accuracy. And it takes days to get the results back.</p> <p>Elaine: Due to our BARC situation, Eric was recently tested. Eric, what was your experience?</p>	

Eric: I had multiple tests and had the results back about a day later.

Elaine: That wasn't here on Vashon, though.

Eric: It was in Burien.

Bob: If we do this, will there be acceptable reasons for refusing to be vaccinated? The only one I can imagine is a medical issue.

Abby: There are religious exemptions, as well. That's the standard.

Bob: It would be whatever we include in our policy. It wouldn't have to include religion. It should be science based.

Abby: I would be concerned about there being a discriminatory element if we ignore the religious exemption.

Josh: It seems like two issues: setting an example and say everyone should be vaccinated. Getting tested every two weeks doesn't make sense to me. As Doug said, you can get infected at any time. The guy at BARC could be infecting children. I don't know that two weeks does it.

Abby: I don't think it's logistically possible. Do we pay for time off when they have to wait for results for a couple days? Do we allow them to work modified duties? I have reservations about requiring vaccinations at our District level. There's the governor's proclamation for the safety of the community. I wonder about the maintenance workers. I would consider it for vulnerable populations. The District office for sure, since it's open to anybody in the public. And if they are working with children who can't be vaccinated. But maintenance could always have their meeting outside. But it's problematic to make exceptions for different types of workers.

Elaine: For maintenance, it goes beyond exposure in meetings. They occasionally have projects where they are working close together. The Vashon Medical Reserve Corp says that even outdoors, it is recommended that you're vaccinated due to the Delta Variant.

Bob: Fully vaccinated people exposed to the virus can bring it home with them. Maintenance workers who have children at home unvaccinated can be exposed. The big worry for me at home is my grandson who is 11 cannot be vaccinated. His Dad is going back to school and is afraid of bringing it home. It's pretty simple – everyone should be vaccinated or have a valid excuse that is science based.

Abby: Is it the Park District's place to decide somebody's choice? It feels that we are mandating something that has nothing to do with the Park District. I am worried about over stepping our bounds. I don't think it's that simple.

Elaine: From my staff's perspective, it's primarily our interaction with each other. It's a safety issue.

Abby: Has everyone had input?

Elaine: No.

Abby: We're talking about firing people or forcing them to do something they don't want to do.

Elaine: I could take that approach.

Bob: But it's not personal. It's society-wide. We're making this last longer, because we are not taking a stand to do what is right.

Abby: But they don't see it that way. If they have made the choice to not get it, they aren't going to agree. We are discussing their jobs and their medical information without any input from them.

Bob: So what are you suggesting we do?

Abby: I don't know. I'm just asking questions, because it doesn't feel like any easy solution. I wouldn't want to be these maintenance guys when we're talking about their jobs and their medical decisions.

Josh: How did you ascertain there are only 4 staff unvaccinated?

Elaine: L&I requires us to either get a copy of their vaccination card or receive an attestation from them. I have talked with one of the maintenance guys. I don't think he will get vaccinated. He has strong feelings against it.

Josh: Were his feelings based on religious beliefs? What was his rationale?

Elaine: It was what the typical responses are – concern about safety of the vaccinations, problem with mandates in general, the “my body, my choice” kind of thing. It’s primarily a safety thing – cases where people have died or become seriously ill.

Bob: We all know that is faulty thinking. It has officially been declared safe. The odds of getting sick or dying is much higher if you don’t get vaccinated.

Doug: Not many people are talking about how all of us, when we were young, were probably vaccinated. There weren’t even permission slips sent home from school – everyone got the small pox vaccine. Now small pox has been eradicated. This is a new thing in American history for people to say it’s okay to object to vaccines. Historically, it isn’t. I would also say I understand the objections to vaccination, but I don’t think they are valid. What about the greater number of people who are reluctant to work beside those who are unvaccinated? Are they going to leave if the rest of their coworkers are not vaccinated? It’s a problem either way. If I were staff, I would be reluctant to work beside someone unvaccinated. And around kids, I would be more worried about it. This is more an issue for the employees of the Park District – what they think. It’s not just about those unvaccinated -- it’s about the entire work force.

Abby: That’s a good point. But it’s a snapshot in time. It’s how people are feeling about it right now. Are we going to require boosters, too?

Josh: We’re putting the cart before the horse. There isn’t consensus amongst governing bodies about the efficacy and necessity of boosters. Some believe it is a waste of money and time to consider boosters. The immunity you now have doesn’t keep you from getting sick but to keep you from dying. I don’t think we need to think that far down the road. The issue before us is just requiring people to get the vaccine.

Abby: Are there other park districts who are moving this way?

Elaine: I have not heard of others. The State Directors group I belong to has recently been about how we interpret the mandates from the governor as they relate to us. For example, our Access staff working at the School District are required to be vaccinated. There are Districts who provide childcare services, so they have to be vaccinated.

Abby: Is there any reason to worry about legal trouble like wrongful termination?

Elaine: I look at City of Seattle or King County’s proclamations as examples. All City of Seattle employees must be vaccinated.

Doug: Does that mean King County employees on Vashon are vaccinated?

Josh: They have until October 18, and it only applies to those who work for the executive branch.

Bob: If we don’t require all to be vaccinated, then we are requiring vaccinated people to work in an unsafe situation. It is backward from what we should want. We want everyone to be safe. The only way to do that is to require all to be vaccinated. Even a religious exemption puts others in a tight spot. I am in favor of requiring all staff to be vaccinated.

Abby: I don’t think you can leave out the religious exemption just because of how you feel.

Bob: What is a religion that would fit this?

Abby: Jehovah’s Witness won’t take vaccinations or blood donations.

Bob: We’re not talking about their own health. We’re talking about others’ health.

Josh: We are going to invite a lawsuit if we discriminate on a religious basis.

Elaine: FYI, I was raised as a Christian Scientist. They are one example opposed to vaccinations. They are exempt and protected. They demonstrate by life commitment of being opposed to taking medication.

	<p>Bob: I would be in favor, then, of making the only exceptions being documented medical (like a letter from their doctor) or religious (but I don't know how you prove that).</p> <p>Josh: Elaine, do you have language available for a mandate?</p> <p>Elaine: I don't have anything specifically. The way I understand the governor's language is all staff must be vaccinated with the exception of a medical or religious exemption.</p> <p>Abby: I wish Eric was still on here. I would like to hear his side.</p> <p>Elaine: I know he feels very strongly in favor of this, despite potentially losing two staff members. Shawn feels the same way.</p> <p>Abby: Is there any possibility this could be construed as Shawn wanting to get rid of a couple employees?</p> <p>Elaine: It would be difficult to lose two maintenance guys. It puts Eric in a tough position, as housekeepers and BARC are difficult positions to fill. Why would we jeopardize losing all those positions just because we wanted to get rid of one? They could always go out and get vaccinated!</p> <p>Josh: What is the time frame we are thinking?</p> <p>Elaine: The Governor is saying October 18. You would need 45 days for Moderna.</p> <p>Bob: Let's just go out two months. So fully vaccinated by November 1.</p> <p>Bob: I move that all employees be fully vaccinated by November 1 for COVID 19 with the exceptions being religious or medical.</p> <p>Doug: Second</p> <p>Bob: Motion to suspend the rules.</p> <p>Josh: Second.</p> <p>Motion to suspend the rules: 4-0</p> <p>Motion: 4-0</p> <p>Abby: I think we should be open to allowing the employees to speak to us if they want to. They can come to the next Board meeting if they need to.</p> <p>Bob: There are policies for that process.</p> <p>Abby: And to clarify, if they are not vaccinated by November 1, they will be fired.</p> <p>Elaine: My preference would be to lay them off, so they would be entitled to unemployment, but that may be up to state law.</p>	<p>Motion: all employees must be fully vaccinated by November 1 for COVID 19 with the exceptions being religious or medical. Pass 4-0</p> <p>Motion to suspend the rules. Pass 4-0</p>
<p>Adjourn 6:30 pm</p>	<p>Bob: Motion to Adjourn.</p> <p>Josh: Second</p> <p>Pass 4-0</p>	<p>Motion to adjourn; Pass 4-0</p>

Minutes by: Elaine Ott-Rocheford