

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**Homeland Security Commission**

Muriel Bowser  
Mayor



Dr. Christopher Rodriguez  
Director

**HOMELAND SECURITY COMMISSION**  
**QUARTERLY MEETING**

**Wednesday, June 10, 2020**  
**2:00 pm to 3:30 pm**  
**Virtual Webex Meeting**

**Commission Member Attendees:** Brad Belzak (Chair), Brian Baker, Phil McNamara, and Ed Pearson

**HSEMA Attendee(s):** Chris White (Deputy Director), Dion Black, Jason Rubinstein

**Additional Attendees:** Jamie Gorosh (Legislative Counsel, Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety)

*Note: No members of the public were present*

Brad: (Opens the meeting, provides introductions and addresses the Commission)

I would just like to take a moment current event. These events represent a significant human rights issue. Beyond anything, people should get out, march, and reform. However, Looting is uncalled for. The city and the Mayor done a great job navigating this.

We as Commissioners are here as advisors and will do more. Let's take this meeting to address each other, talk about the Unity March, state of protests, and of course COVID-19. The Commission is here to sift through the information and misinformation and put in data driven proposals. Let's start with introductions to get the meeting started.

Brian Baker: I would just like to say that through these times I've been very proud to be a DC Resident. DC Fire, HSEMA, DC Council and all contributing agencies have done an incredible job supporting the March, keeping the city safe, and balancing this during COVID-19 response. Chris White, if you could pass on to your agency and members of public safety a big thanks for all the continued work you have been doing. I know its been a lot of sleepless nights around the clock, and your efforts are having a very positive impact.

Phil: I echo the major kudos to the Mayor, Director Rodriguez, HSEMA, and DC Department of Health. Everyone since mid-March has been going over and beyond on coronavirus pandemic response and a public safety response that has facilitated and narrated very peaceful protests. This has been literally one incident after another. A huge thanks to everyone on the front line and supporting during these times. I came down on sixteenth street and saw the "Black Lives Matter" message, in person. It was very moving. Thank you, again.

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Brad: Chris can you give us a snapshot of where we are from HSEMA's side and the District response?

Chris White: (Thanks the group and confirms who is on the call).

We just entered month 4 of activation. The EOC is set up at the DC Health building. It has been a good experience and we have really come together. As a District, we went into phase 1 of reopening on May 29. Over this time, we have seen general decline in new cases. In the past 2 days we saw a small increase, but overall, the trend has been very positive. We do believe we are on the other side of the curve and can proceed to dial up steady-state services. From a public health perspective, things have been trending in right direction. In terms of phase 2, we are thinking about metrics tracking.

Here are the key metrics we consider:

1. Community Spread
2. Transmission Rate
3. Case Positivity Rate
4. Health Service Capacity

Again, we are progressing in the right direction, but we are still looking to maintain sustained decreases in transmission rates, rates of positive cases, and community spread over an extended period. That is the focus of our set up. Operationally, we are expanding testing and now can do so with less restrictions. We have 15 sites around town, including three public sites. We have several firehouses and walk in locations that may be tested within regular core hours during the week. We are doing roughly 400 tests a day. There has been increased demand for testing since the protests and we will be assessing that impact on the overall public health situation.

Looking ahead, in terms of contact tracing- our goal is to get 800-900 contact tracers. We are pushing government employees to take training so we can also leverage our workforce in this effort. That is the summary in a nutshell. We also have roughly 13 grocery distribution sites. School systems are providing sites around the city to provide meals for students and the community. Essential food lines have multiple continued efforts for the foreseeable future.

In terms of isolation quarantine facilities, we have hotels for housing folks within vulnerable population and people experiencing homelessness. Again, the strategy has been to avoid clusters within the homeless population. For recovery operations, folks are tracking the federal buckets of money to make sure we are aware of what is available and needed financially. Our planning team is working with the Reopen DC Committee and we are actively working with each agency to track costs.

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In terms of operations, we are focused on cost recovery and we have a team of folks tracking the federal streams of money to ensure we are charging expenses correctly and efficiently. To sum it up we built an organization that at large is working well and is staffed appropriately. The big question is how long is this going to go on?

We are not making adjustments to our current posture but are poised to do so if needed. We acknowledge the potential of having a second wave and we are in this fight for the foreseeable future. We think about keeping staff focused and motivated. I'm very proud of our staff and city response.

To comment on the protests and our recent posture, the 1<sup>st</sup> amendment activity has been the focus over the last week and half. MPD is the key law enforcement agency and we are supporting in any way we can.

Phil: Thank you. One observation is just a big hats-off to HSEMA and please pass this sentiment along. The coronavirus.dc.gov website is phenomenal. It is very user friendly. I go at least a few times a week. Please pass long my appreciation for the efforts that are going into that site. On the metrics you discussed, I wanted to comment on how we get from phase 1 to 2, obviously hinged on a decrease in community spread and keeping a low transmission rate. One thing that I don't have as much clarity on is the contact tracing. At one point we heard the District is trying to bring on 900 or so contact tracers. Can you speak a bit to that? And before you go into discussion on Black Lives Matter, I would like to know your perspective on the height of coronavirus response in April. Just maybe if you could give how you feel about your ability back then to take on a planned or unplanned incident, in tandem with hurricane season.

Chris: (Speaks a bit about contract tracing, protests, and hurricane season).

Brad: Just to touch back on mass care. We recognize the city is putting up temporary housing and leverage the convention center. Whatever happens, we are still going to need additional capacity. New development is good, but we are losing homeless shelters to new condos and space to care for people who are especially vulnerable. We also have regular concerns outside of COVID- such as the pure resiliency efforts needed to respond to waterfront flooding and displacement. What is our issue, what is Maryland along the waterfront?

Circling back to our study, I propose the following:

1. We stay the course, looking at resiliency and mass care in lens of catastrophic events.
2. Let's think about how we want to do this study. We are not trying to get in the way of first responders. I was happy we were able to reopen up as a Commission. One reason I didn't push sooner is because I wanted to preserve first responder bandwidth. That said I'm open suggestions on how we can press forward as a commission while balancing this interest.

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Phil: So, how can we be impactful without getting in the way? We could approach it from the perspective of inviting in folks from outside of DC or other cities or states and that did a remarkable job to develop mass care responsibilities. I would have to rely on Brian or Chris White from HSEMA to navigate these contacts. We could invite 2 or 3 of them to get expertise to get what our county has done. The idea is to leverage perspectives of those outside the District. We could also do, similar to what auditors do - a paper examination. See mass care policies, plans and playbook. We could review the papers and procedures. Those are two ideas I would propose.

Also, if this is going to take us 4 months to do - maybe we cycle it to bring in the District in the latter two months.

Brian: I think that approach makes a lot of sense. We want them to be impactful and think about how we offer something that can be used? There is actually a decent amount of money provided through federal agencies (FEMA, HUD, etc.). Can our study include recommendations about what the District can do to improve mass care and improve resilience ahead of next disaster? We can assess resources, what we have in front of us, and propose ideas on funding. Can we take a report and include in HUD applications of other reports? Maybe we as a body can supplement those efforts through our study.

Brad: We also we use the port authority models, mass ports, and others that speak to resiliency, as we assess the impact.

Let's think about this after the call and share our contacts. Let's do a hybrid, with non-DC and DC entities. Having the anecdotal information and seeing some disaster plans and temporary housing plans can supplement our study. We can do a cursory review and a gap analysis. As an example, doing reviews of key cities such as LA, NY and other major markets, and certainly DC. Let's do out-of-state first and then in state as our order-of-operations. I'd like to get a report that's actionable and is something we can get coordinated and distributed quickly. We will use a combo of interviews and data and lessons learned.

Brian: I like that approach.

Brad: We will lay this out in an email, and we will have vote and concur if Jason and Dion are fine with this from the administration side.

Jason: Id recommend we take yours and Brian's vote now, and we do the remaining via email, if Dion agrees? We can use this approve minutes from the last meeting, as well.

Dion: Yes, we can make record of the motion on the floor and use email as electronic means to complete the votes. This way, we are achieving quorum to make the final decision.

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Brad: So, we can vote today and make the plan proposal, and then ask the remaining commission members to vote so we can come to final decision and consensus. Is that allowable?

Dion: Yes. This will allow the final decision to be made with quorum, as required.

Brad: Great. Here is outline moving forward – we vote to proceed with the report, examining resilience and how prepared we are in the city. We are looking at this from a mass care lens with resilience undertone.

Brian: I concur.

Brad: Second, the report length. I think it should be long enough to have an impact and enough substance, but short enough to get it done and for it be digestible. Does 4-6 pages work?

Brian: I think that works.

Brad: In terms of completion schedule, it's a short report. It depends how soon we get meetings on the calendar and synthesize information. What is a fair date? I want it to be actionable. Can we do this by mid-September? I will push hard to get a push report by Labor Day. Can we vote to go for trying to get the report out by Labor Day?

Brian: I agree.

***Meeting adjourned. End of recording.***