



**RICHMOND AMBULANCE AUTHORITY**  
**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**MINUTES**  
**AUGUST 31, 2021**

Present: Matt Conrad, Chairman *(by electronic communication means)*  
Weet Baldwin, Vice Chairman *(by electronic communication means)*  
Richard Bennett, Treasurer *(by electronic communication means)*  
Julia Hammond, Secretary *(by electronic communication means)*  
Kristen Larson, Director *(by electronic communication means)*  
Beth Matish, Director *(by electronic communication means)*  
Kirk Roberts, Director *(by electronic communication means)*

Absent: Carlos Hopkins, Director  
Brandon Mencini, Director  
Lincoln Saunders, Director  
Sheila White, Director

Counsel: Lauren Fisher-White, Christian & Barton *(by electronic communication means)*

Staff: Chip Decker, Chief Executive Officer *(by electronic communication means)*  
Laura Bickham, Senior Executive Assistant and Assistant Secretary to the Board of Directors *(by electronic communication means)*

**Note:** *This meeting was held as an electronic meeting pursuant to Ordinance No. 2021-181 (City Council for the City of Richmond, June 28, 2021) due to the disaster represented by the spread of COVID-19.*

*This electronic meeting was held using the business communication platform, Microsoft Teams®.*



## **I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Matt Conrad called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. This meeting was held as an electronic meeting pursuant to and in compliance with Ordinance No. 2021-181, adopted June 28, 2021 by the City Council of the City of Richmond. On August 27, 2021, the public was notified this electronic meeting would be taking place by way of written notice, posted on the Richmond Ambulance Authority's website. Written notice was also provided to the Clerk's Office of the City of Richmond. Public accessibility to join the meeting via electronic communication means was made available through the written notice.

## **II. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Laura Bickham, Assistant Secretary to the Board, is responsible for receiving comments from the public; receipt of which was required in advance of today's meeting. Matt Conrad asked if any member of the public requested to participate in today's meeting. Laura Bickham responded there were no members of the public present nor were any public comments submitted prior to today's meeting.

## **III. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. COVID-19 Vaccination Mandate**

Chip Decker advised many public safety organizations and associations have suggested the rollout of some form of a COVID-19 vaccination mandate. Should implementation of a mandate be desired, the recommended motion provided to the Board would allow Chip Decker the flexibility needed due to the nature of the pandemic and the fluidity of the country's continued response to the ongoing situation. Matt Conrad concurred, explaining the options available and noted the two legal exclusions for requiring employee vaccinations, which are religious beliefs (that can be authenticated) and medical exemptions. Chip Decker explained the challenge becomes whether to only allow the legal exemptions or to also include an exemption for personal choice subject to recurring testing. He mentioned a scenario of possibly running out of testing materials. 79% of RAA staff are fully vaccinated and 85% have received their first dose. Unvaccinated staff include the following: 15 full-time field providers, five part-time field providers, two full-time System Status Controllers, four part-time System Status Controllers, two Logistics Service Technicians and four Administrative staff members. Chip Decker stated a mandate will require procedures that address ongoing vaccination needs (such as booster shots).

Julia Hammond inquired as to the potential impact a mandate might have on RAA's operation. Chip Decker responded should people decide to remain unvaccinated after a mandate is issued, it needs to be determined if there will be testing requirements in place or potential suspension that may lead up to termination. Weet Baldwin asked Beth Matish how HCA is addressing the issue, to which she responded neither HCA nor Bon Secours currently have vaccination requirements in place. Matt Conrad advised VCU announced Health System employees have until September 15<sup>th</sup> to receive their first dose

of a vaccine, adding only the two legal exemptions discussed earlier will be permitted. He explained this requirement will be progressive, up to and including termination.

**Note:** Kristen Larson joined the meeting during the discussion.

Kirk Roberts inquired as to the costs associated with testing employees and whether it would be the employee's responsibility. Lauren Fisher-White responded there is a Virginia statute which prohibits the employer from passing along the cost of medical testing to the employee. Chip Decker briefly left the meeting to obtain the costs associated with testing.

Matt Conrad explained the motion presented to the Board was drafted broadly enough to allow Chip Decker to put in place any process(es) he may deem appropriate. He continued, adding Chip Decker is not necessarily looking for action to be taken from the Board; rather advice and guidance to assure RAA is taking the best step forward with implementation of a mandate. He then referenced the proposed motion provided for Board consideration.

**Motion:** To direct the CEO to institute a COVID-19 vaccination mandate with the appropriate exclusions to include religion and disabilities and other exclusions deemed necessary by the CEO.

**Made By:** Weet Baldwin

**Seconded:** Kristen Larson

**Motion Passed:** Laura Bickham conducted a roll call vote and the votes were recorded as follows:

**Ayes:**

Weet Baldwin  
Kristen Larson  
Matt Conrad  
Richard Bennett  
Beth Matish  
Kirk Roberts

**Nays:**

Julia Hammond

**Note:** Following the vote, the discussion continued.

Chip Decker advised the costs for testing, which are as follows: 1) \$85.00/test for a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test, 2) \$13.47/test for the rapid (antigen-detection) test. This rapid test requires a specific machine to provide results, and 3) \$10.40/test for the rapid (antigen-detection) test, that uses a swab for determining if the virus is present at that given moment.

Chip Decker referenced the City's approach and inquired as to the Board's position with regard to having RAA follow. Kristen Larson recommended the mandate should be the same across the board, adding RAA employees are considered City public safety workers. She expressed appreciation to Chip Decker for bringing this sensitive issue forward, commenting she is unsure how best to address the matters surrounding potential testing. She suggested that maybe the best thing to do is to take a hard stand on the

matter and work from there, adding she is unsure how best to move forward and relies on Chip Decker's leadership. Chip Decker responded RAA is considering following the City, adding RAA is looking at requiring full vaccination by November 1<sup>st</sup> or suspension without pay, leading up to termination. He explained it would not be practical to keep someone suspended without pay indefinitely, to which Beth Matish agreed. She then announced she needed to leave for another meeting she had scheduled.

**Note:** Beth Matish left the meeting during the discussion.

Kirk Roberts reported his company has 100% of its administrative workforce vaccinated, while the entire workforce in the field remains unvaccinated. He noted the tough position RAA is in, having to determine how best to move forward. Matt Conrad stated he tends to concur with Kristen Larson at this point.

#### IV. ADJOURNMENT

Matt Conrad adjourned the August 31, 2021 Special Meeting of the Board of Directors at 1:40 p.m.

  
  
Laura Bickham, Assistant Secretary