

Minutes of the County Commissioners Special meeting held on January 25, 2022

The Board of the Grady County Commissioners met on this day for an Special meeting with the following board members: Ralph Beard, Kirk Painter, and Mike Walker.

The meeting was called to order and roll call: Ralph Beard, Kirk Painter, and Mike Walker

Others present: Judge Kory Kirkland, Judge Gina Lowe, Judge Joseph Young, Jason Hicks, Charles Sifers, Jim Weir, Lisa Hannah, Jill Locke, Dale Thompson, and Bobby Cantu.

Discussion regarding policies for entrance into the courthouse, or other County properties, during times of infectious disease outbreaks, including, but not limited to COVID.

Commissioner Beard stated the reason for the meeting was to decide if we should have a jury trial next week, January 31, 2022 or implement an alternative procedure, as he had concerns that the increased number of people in the courthouse could cause us to have to close the courthouse down again. Dale Thompson gave the update on the COVID report: 1,310 cases in Grady County, this number is up from 756 from the past week which is a 127% increase. The hospital currently has up to 7 inpatients, this number is up from 5, and there are no open beds at the hospital at this time. Commissioner Beard said that we could see a spike in cases in two or three more weeks. He stated the goal should be to keep the courthouse open. Judge Kirkland said we need to find a balance. He handed out his COVID-19 jury trial rules for Grady County Jury Term. Judge Kirkland stated that they would have 75 to 90 people show up for jury selection, out of those they would only request 50 to stay, 25 people will be for the panel and 25 will be placed in the courtroom. Then 16 jurors that are picked will be spread out and they would be using Judge Lowe's courtroom for deliberation for social distancing purposes. He wanted the Commissioner's to know that 100% of the people selected for Jury Trial that have requested to be released were released if they were worried about safety due to COVID. He stated that they have not had a civil trial since 2019 because only criminal trial cases were allowed. Charles Sifers, ADA stated that the variant that we presently have is much more contagious, so the precautionary steps to protect people from COVID that worked before, may not work now. Mr. Sifers was also worried if this would be a good representation of the people of the County. Judge Kirkland stated that the people are still picked at random and that the attorneys have also been notified of this procedure and they are in agreement. Jason Hicks, DA spoke and said the public should feel safe and so should the employees; therefore, we should use every resource we have to protect everyone. The Board agreed that temperature checks should be reinstated immediately for the courthouse and masks should be worn on Monday; both are effective for County employees and the public.

Commissioner Beard stated are we all in agreement that we should hold court this next Monday with everything we just discussed and reevaluate in two weeks?

Ralph Beard made a motion to adopt the policy for the 5th amended COVID-19 jury trial rules for Grady County with the exception of any changes that may be made in the future. The Courts will look at the situation again in two weeks. Along with putting in place the temperature checks from this day until further notice and masks being worn by everyone on Monday. It was seconded by Kirk Painter. AYE: Ralph Beard, Kirk Painter, and Mike Walker.

Ralph Beard made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Kirk Painter. AYE: Ralph Beard, Kirk Painter, and Mike Walker.

Meeting Adjourned.

Passed and approved on Monday, January 31, 2022.

Attest:

Jill Locke

County Clerk



The Board of the Grady County Commissioners

Chairman

Paul J. Renteria

Vice Chairman

Robert A. Wall

Member