

**PUBLIC HEALTH SOLUTIONS
District Health Department**

Board of Health

March 19, 2020

Board Members in Attendance:

Larry Cerny	Janet Henning	Judy Henning	John Hill
Stephanie Knight	Christy Lucking	Mark Schoenrock	

Board Members Absent:

Dave Bruning, Dr. Josue Gutierrez, Dr Bruce Kennedy, Dave Norton, Timothy Pickering

Staff Members in Attendance:

Kim Buser, Director; Sonya Williamson, Fiscal Administration; Debra L. Wendelin, Office Coordinator

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by President Larry Cerny. Notice of the meeting was given in advance thereof by posting required by law.

Approval of Agenda:

Meeting agenda was reviewed. One change to note in the agenda was an incorrect date for the next meeting. It should read 05-21-2020. Motion to approve the agenda by Janet Henning, seconded by Mark Schoenrock. All ayes, motion #1 carried.

Approval of Minutes:

Previous meeting minutes were not emailed before the meeting. President Larry Cerny informed members we would wait to approve January's minutes in May along with March minutes.

Financial Reports: Acceptance

Sonya Williamson presented on the Financial Reports. Nothing unusual as far as financials. After due diligence in trying to find a less expensive health care package for the department, we decided to stay with our same plan with a 14% increase in premiums. Without paperwork to verify Sonya said this increase is roughly \$50 per employee. Sonya will report back to the Board at its May meeting with an accurate total. Kim shared this increase will affect program manager's budgets as they will have to allow for this increase with less dollars going toward grant activities. Kim indicated that we have had an approximate \$2,000 increase in our employee liability insurance. The increase is not reflected on the current financial reports but will show up next month. We haven't heard anything official regarding the HFA expansion grant or the \$100,000 HRSA grant. PHS will be taking funds from the Nebraska Public Agency Investment Trust (NPAIT) back to Union Bank. We currently have a larger-than-normal balance sitting in our checking account since NPAIT does not permit automatic transfer from accounts (sweeps) to coverage balance overages. Kim said this transition back to Union Bank will provide her with piece of mind to know that accounts sweeps will happen automatically every two weeks, if needed, to cover payroll. John Hill commented he found no issues with Union Bank after his research into what caused the switch from Union Bank to NPAIT.

Motion to approve the financial reports and the transition back to Union Bank by Mark Schoenrock, seconded by Janet Henning. All ayes, motion #2 carried.

Grants and Contracts - Acceptance

Kim did not have any grants to discuss. There have been a few small grants come in which she will discuss at the May meeting.

Minutes of PHSDHD Board of Health Meeting

Directors Report:

Kim and Kate are being overwhelmed with COVID-19 calls. Current case counts show 27 in Nebraska, 2 community-spread cases in Omaha, 1 in the South Heartland Public Health district, and zero cases in the PHS five-county district. Currently 200 COVID-19 tests have been run in Nebraska. PHS has had 5-6 tests ran with negative results and 4-5 tests still out waiting for results which are our 7-10 business days to receive results.

We are now seeing testing issues as labs are at their capacity putting a drain on our already taxed health care system. Nebraska Public Health Lab and UNMC are looking at longer stretches of time in getting test results out. Three private labs stepped up to run test kits but due to the large volume of tests coming in, one lab has stopped accepting tests and the other two are at their capacity. Not everyone with symptoms has COVID-19. The media is causing hysteria and is not helping with the situation. The Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) has been disbursed. Our shipment did include N95 masks but limited Personal Protective Equipment. Long-term care facilities and rescue squads in our district are requesting N95 masks, which in theory they only need procedure masks. No one anticipated this crazy shortage on PPE. Kim, Kate and Jill will come up with a supply disbursement list of stored goods we already have and disburse those accordingly.

The Douglas County Public Health Department Board of Health has approved enforceable directive health measures to ensure the public's safety. Negligence to adhere is a misdemeanor offense. Twelve health departments now have that measure allowing them to dictate to the public and it becomes law. Jane Ford-Witthoff, former PHS Director, did not have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed with each county in our district to have that authority. Kim is not worried at this time and Board of Health members said they would be willing to sign MOU's.

The PHS Command Team met by telephone with district Emergency Managers (EM's). Kate has put together a community plan that will be put into place tomorrow. Kate will send out a daily email briefing to all EM's bringing them up to date on COVID-19 case counts, new COVID-19 guidance, and will respond back to questions asked. Kim will host a weekly overview on either Tuesday or Friday of events occurring that week.

Every county but Fillmore has filed a County Emergency Declaration with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Larry Cerny indicated Fillmore County will complete next Tuesday after their Board meeting.

Kim is not giving out the current travel list and is screening calls as they come in. Eventually this list will cease as COVID-19 continues to spread and all areas will be affected.

Staff is doing a great job as we are confronted with the chaos of COVID-19. Kim and Kate are busy answering telephone calls, responding to emails, and making decisions. Megan has been doing an amazing job as Public Information Officer (PIO) getting information and updates out to the public, Sonya as Logistics Section Chief has picked up SNS supplies, front office staff are engulfed in incoming telephone calls, while other staff have stepped up to the plate to support the cause.

Open Forum:

Kim directed the remainder of the meeting to answer questions Board of Health members had.

Is there some level of immunity after you've had COVID-19?

There is some level of immunity but without being able to do complete further studies there is no evidence to support how long that immunity remains. Eventually everyone will have had COVID-19 and that will be what takes us out of this.

Is it true that there are gastrointestinal issues associated with COVID-19?

Gastrointestinal issues could be a new focus for patients diagnosed with COVID-19 in combination with other symptoms including fever, cough, shortness of breath, and fatigue. At this time gastrointestinal issues will not be part of the screening for COVID-19.

What is the life span of COVID-19 droplets?

Studies have shown that the virus that causes COVID-19 was detectable in the air for up to three hours. The length of time may be comprised depending on humid, moist conditions versus dry air.

Minutes of PHSDHD Board of Health Meeting

Do we have cross-training in place that staff could work from home if necessary?

Staff with laptops at home have been given directions on how to remote from home. Program managers would have their own programs they could work on from home but a decision has not been made regarding program support staff working from home. We are trying to hold off as long as we can before we get to this point. We may look at closing our front door to the public now that immunization clinics have been cancelled. Kim worries about access to those people who don't have a primary care provider (PCP) for evaluation and need the resources for healthcare networks that can help them.

All telephone lines can be forwarded to staff at home. We would have to decide who would be responsible for answering the main line or would we divide this responsibility among staff.

We have not done much in the way of cross-training staff. Our Workforce Development Team is currently working on procedures where staff write down critical tasks of their position so someone could generally pick up their job while they are gone. Sonya shared with the Board that other health departments are facing the same dilemma we are. The Quick Books program is used across the board so should we be faced with a staff shortage one of these departments would be able to step in and run payroll.

Any legislative updates on additional resources for public health departments?

LB1018, which requested a total of \$6.3 million dollars for infrastructure costs to local public health departments (approximately \$50,000 per health department), didn't pass with Senators. The Appropriations Committee came back approving \$1.5 million dollars (\$83,000 per health department for infrastructure costs). This amount will be written into our budget. Pandemic money is available and will be disbursed according to the Governor's directive. The Appropriations Committee may go back to approving the original \$6.3 million dollar request and a one-time allocation to be split between health departments. Kim heard yesterday that total may be increased to \$10 million dollars so we remain cautiously optimistic that this will occur.

How are we supporting distribution of meals to the families of children who are out of school?

Christy Lucking indicated starting next week in Fairbury children up to age 18 can receive free breakfast and lunch at a designated pick-up point that will be manned by school staff waiting outside to distribute meals. Stephanie Knight said the same procedure will followed in Geneva. Mark stressed as Board of Health members we need to stay on top of this as these meals may be the only ones certain kids get during the day.

Stephanie Knight offered her hospital's mental health treatment resources via telehealth for our district. Since schools have closed Stephanie has noted an increase in Child Protective Services (CPS) calls of abuse/neglect, financial issues, and families being together all day in small quarters. Kim thanked Stephanie for her offer and will visit with her to see how we can put this into place.

Has Kim contacted Sherry Miller? (Mark Schoenrock)

Kim suggested Mark let Sherry know to reach out to her. Daycare recommendations at this point are ten kids per room, not including staff. Parents are being asked to volunteer their spot to open up a space for children of critical public safety personnel.

Mark Schoenrock received a press release that the Families First Coronavirus Response Act was passed into law by President Trump Wednesday morning. The legislation provides paid leave, establishes free testing, protects public health workers, and provides important benefits to children and families.

Christy Lucking shared with the Board that the week of April 6-12, 2020 is National Public Health Week. Christy posed the question of what can the Board do to show our appreciation to PHS staff for all their hard work during the COVID-19 outbreak. Kim thought that was an excellent idea and will share her thoughts with the Board.

Mark Schoenrock wanted to compliment PHS staff for all they are doing. Mark was especially appreciative of the public health service announcements in our district that Kate lined up that he hears daily stressing measures the public needs to do to "flatten" the curve. Christy Lucking, Stephanie Knight, and the rest of the Board complimented Kim on her email to staff outlining policies that PHS will put into place as an employer due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Minutes of PHSDHD Board of Health Meeting

The next Board of Health Meeting is Thursday, May 21, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. in Crete, NE.

Being no further business the meeting was declared adjourned.

Debra L. Wendelin
Office Administrator

